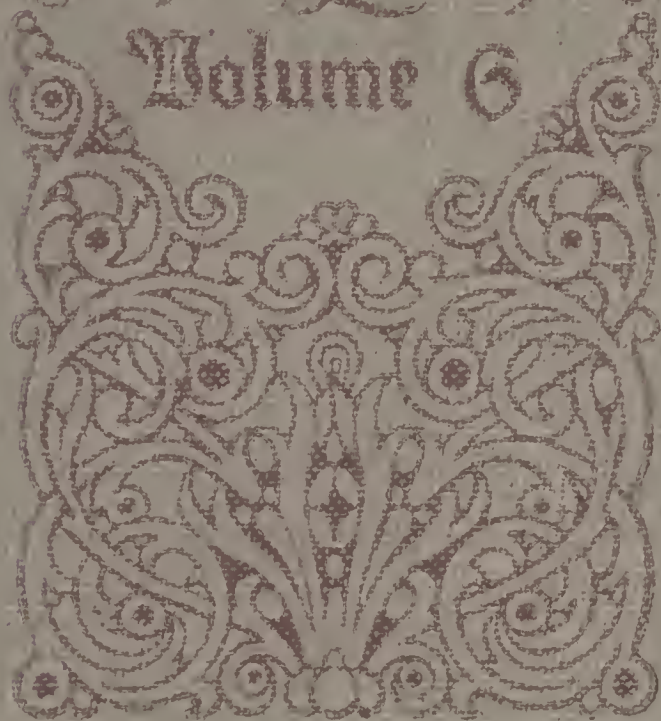


The Best Stories  
by the Foremost  
Catholic Authors  
Volume 6





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**The Best Stories**  
by the  
**Foremost Catholic**  
**Authors**

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN, LL.D.

IN TEN VOLUMES

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# With the Coming of the Fleet

BY MARY E. MANNIX

SIDE by side on one of the benches of the Park sat two old women, awaiting with hundreds of other spectators, the arrival of "the fleet," which had been sighted only a few moments before. They were strangers to each other, not having exchanged a word, until the elder of the two, lowering the glasses she had been holding to her eyes, said to her neighbor :

"Would you like to look?"

"Thank you, very much," answered the other, taking them from her hand. For the next few moments she was steadily engaged in scanning the view before her.

Her companion gazed contemplatively into the hazy distance. The whistles began to blow. A thin film of smoke became visible along the horizon. Gradually it thickened and grew darker. The ships' hulls could plainly be seen, faintly outlined against the background of dull gray sky. The morning had been foggy, and the eager populace, gathered at every available point of vantage,

deplored to each other this very unusual happening in that land of perpetual sunshine and azure sky.

Nearer and nearer they came, till, as the first mighty destroyer, the flag-ship, rounded the point, leading her companions, and displacing for the first time in many months her native American waters, the sun beamed forth brightly, bathing mountain and sea in a flood of radiant, joyful welcome. And as the vessels continued to approach, those who had powerful glasses could discern the sailors by thousands in the rigging, waving their caps, and could imagine the shouts they did not hear. Upon the shore many eyes were dimmed, and there was very little cheering, but that was because of the depth of the emotion and the sincerity of the welcome that rose from the hearts of the spectators. The men on the ships that were now slowly and majestically steaming into the harbor were not returning from war; there were no weeping widows or fatherless children to grieve at the advent of those white-hulled monarchs of the seas, yet there were tears in the vast multitude assembled to greet them, tears of pride and joy. Tears also, we may well conjecture, in the eyes of the gallant tars every moment advancing nearer



the shore. For it was a triumphal ending to a victory of peace, and the fleet was home again—thousands of miles, it is true, from the port of embarkation months before, but still “at home.” And when, at length, the whole sixteen swung partly inshore and the signal-flags flashed from the forward arms of their leader, the Connecticut, “Stand by to anchor!” a solemn hush seemed to fall simultaneously on all who watched: the groups on the breakwater—on the beach, on the roofs of tall buildings, on the broad high stretch of the Park, which though distant from the place of anchorage, had afforded a splendid view of the whole fleet as it passed.

The women looked at each other. Both sighed.

“I’m glad I’ve lived to see it,” said the younger of the two. “It’s grand, and it’s sad, too. I can’t help thinking that most of those sailor lads are miles and miles away from their home port still.”

“Yes. Lookin’ at it that way it is a little sad,” rejoined the other, wiping a tear from her eye, “but I’d be glad—O, how glad wouldn’t I be, if I knew or even suspected that my boy was among them.”

“You have a boy at sea, then?” asked her companion.

“O Lord, I don’t know,” was the reply. “Whether he’s living or dead I can’t say any more than you, who never saw him.”

“Did he run away?”

“Yes, he ran away,” rejoined the lonely mother, simply, in a dreary monotonous tone, as of one who had long supped and slept with sorrow, and was now resigned to it as her daily portion.

“A young fellow?”

“Seventeen. He had a stepfather, and they didn’t get along. It was queer all the way through. You see when I was a girl two young fellows liked me, and I was about equally divided in my likin’ for them. But Jack spoke first, and I married him. He didn’t turn out well; drank and wasted his money, but treated me and the boy as kindly as any man like him could. After he died—little Jack was twelve then—Peter came along again and I married him. From the first the boy resented it, though he shouldn’t, for Peter made us a good livin’. He’s dead now, these five years. He was very kind to me—a good man.”

“How long is he gone—your boy?”

“Nine years.”

“And never a word from him?”

“Not one.”

"If he's alive, it is heartless, cruel. I wouldn't grieve for him."

"Had you ever a son?"

"I never had."

"Very well, then, you can't understand."

"Perhaps not. Have you any reason to think he went to sea?"

"None at all."

"Then you don't imagine he's with the squadron?"

"I've never thought that he might be with it."

"It's pretty hard lines," said the other. "I thought perhaps you might have come to California lookin' for him to be with the fleet."

"No, I didn't, but now you've put it in my mind I'll be interested more than ever in watchin' the sailors. I came here for weak lungs, and I like the climate."

"Got property?"

"Enough to keep me."

"Well, there's some worse off. Now my only brother died last year in an asylum."

"Bad—but you knew where he was. That's the worst—not to know."

"I suppose it is. I guess I must be going. It's long after dinner time. Good-morning."

“Good-morning,” rejoined the old woman, moving to the corner of the bench the other had vacated, and looking pensively out on bay and sea. She was small and slight, with clear, well-cut features and soft skin, and a very gentle expression of face. She was neatly dressed in black, and wore an old-fashioned bonnet that became her better than anything more modern would have done. Little by little the crowds, of which she was wholly unobservant, melted away, and she remained seated on the bench long after the place was deserted.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the first day of the return of the fleet, the dignitaries of the town welcomed those of the squadron. On the next the whole populace turned out to witness the procession of the blue-jackets, which were landed from the ships on barges, to the number of ten thousand. And then came the mammoth parade, where men and women cheered as the jackies marched by column after column sixteen abreast through the crowded streets lined with people all well behaved and orderly, in spite of the temptations that always exist on such an occasion. The sailors were a fine, manly, sun-browned lot of fellows, of whom any nation might

be proud. Seated on a piazza on the line of march, to which she had kindly been invited by the owner who had noticed her pathetic loneliness amid the crowd, the old woman of the park bench suddenly rose to her feet, exclaiming:

“O how like him!”

Then she sank back again, shaking her head, and resumed her quiet observance of the passing procession. When it was over, she thanked her hostess and walked quietly away.

Very early on Saturday morning, three days later, she toiled slowly up the hill once more, glass in hand, to see the fleet go out as she had watched it come in, though the morning was very foggy, and the islands hidden almost entirely from view. There were not many in the Park at that hour, and the old woman sought the bench she had occupied the Tuesday previous. As yet there was no appearance of movement among the ships, only faint wavering lines of smoke indicating their position through the haze. The heart of the desolate mother was sad indeed this morning—as it had been ever since the afternoon of the great procession, when, among the marching sailors, she had caught a fleeting glimpse of one whom she fancied resembled her lost boy. The glance, short



and evanescent as it was, had widened the old wound. From time to time she would raise the glass to her eyes—till at length through the lifting fog, she could discern the dim outlines of the sixteen battleships at regular distances apart. Then she realized that they had begun to move, and were slowly steaming along the horizon. One by one they passed from view, rounding Point Loma, in the dim light of the cloudy morning. When all had gone beyond the line of her vision, the old woman leaned back upon the bench and closed her weary eyes, from which tears were now steadily falling.

On a slight elevation about a hundred feet behind her sat two sailors, who had just received their discharge.

“Well, they’re gone,” said one, “and God be with them.”

“Amen,” rejoined the other.

“Somehow I feel a little lost, don’t you, Jack?”

“Yes, and I’ve a long journey to make before I settle to anything.”

“Where is your home?”

“I haven’t any that I know of. I’ve been a bad boy. I had one of the best and kindest mothers you ever saw. I had a stepfather to boot—and I



imagined he treated me badly. He didn't, though; only wanted to make a good man of me. I see that now. I ran away, and from that day to this I've never heard a word from home."

"You never wrote?"

"Not a line. God forgive me. But I promised Father Gleason when he shook my hand last night, that I'd go home. And I'm going; if my mother is living I'll be good to her, Tom—indeed I will."

"You've been nine years in the navy, haven't you?"

"Nine years."

"And with a fine record. You must have a tidy sum put by."

"I have."

"I can't imagine you treating your mother that way, Jack."

"Well, I did. 'Twould serve me right to find her dead when I go home."

"Why not write?"

"Oh, no, I'm going back to Ohio in any case, to God's country." The two men rose. "See yonder on that bench," said Jack, "there's a little woman who looks very much as my mother used to, only she is a great deal older. Let's pass along.

that way—I want to get another and a nearer glimpse of her.”

The two men walked quickly down the steep narrow path, scattering the stones as they went with their heavy broad-soled shoes.

The old woman turned at the noise of the falling pebbles. Jack started back, gave an exclamation, and with one word, “Mother?” rushed toward her and held out his brawny arms. With a smothered cry she fell into their warm clasp, while the other man, respecting the solemn moment, walked down the hill alone.

# His Old Home

BY NORA TYNAN O'MAHONY

SEATED in his new motor, with his small golden-haired daughter tucked in closely and comfortably beside him, Sir Gilbert Grey as he raced along the green country lanes experienced such a vivid sense of exhilaration and *joie de vivre* as he had not felt for a good many years. There was certainly something wonderfully delightful and soul-refreshing in speeding and rushing through the air in this newly-acquired and expensive toy of his, which if it had not been for little Alice he might possibly never have thought of purchasing. It was a fresh May morning, with the larks singing high in the clear sky; the sun shone goldenly on the buttercupped pastures and waving green meadows on each side of the road, the hedges were covered with a snowy mantle of hawthorn, whose perfume seemed to fill the whole world with its fragrance. A world of beauty and gladness surely, where there was no longer room for sorrow or useless repining, where the shadow of loss, even of Death itself, was blotted out

for to-day at least by the bright and cheering sunshine.

As if infected by the spirit of the wind, the wind that bloweth where it listeth, he sped his car along the shining white road without caring very much in what direction it might bring him. Now it was along a broad straight ribbon stretching clearly before him, where he might drive at whatever speed he wished without danger or interruption; again, more cautiously, his fancy led him through winding, interminable green lanes, where the high hedges hid all but the tops of the misty purple hills, and the banks were a starry wonder of pale primroses and blue violets blowing late in the shade, with ground-ivy and speedwell and stitchwort climbing their way through the brambles to look at the sun.

It was a long time now since he had come this way; five years ago, nay, even one year ago, he had hardly dared to enter this stretch of quiet, sweet country, where had taken place all the joys, all the sorrow of his life. But to-day—perhaps it was partly the exhilaration of his drive, perhaps it was that seven-year-old Alice was now grown to be such a comforting companion for him—but somehow the old wound seemed healed, life held a brighter,

cheerier aspect than he had thought it might hold for him ever again.

Here in the days when he had been plain Gilbert Grey, ere his uncle Maurice and his one scapegrace son had both died in the same year—the father of grief for his son's misdoings and untimely death—leaving him unexpected heir to the title and the somewhat impoverished estates, the young man had passed two short, intensely happy years of wedded life. But when little Alice was hardly more than a twelvemonth old, the young mother died after an illness of such short duration that her husband had hardly time to realize its seriousness when she was already gone from him.

The suddenness and unexpectedness of the blow, the cruel shattering of his earthly paradise, left him for a time almost demented with grief. He had handed over the child to the care of a relative, had gone away, and vainly sought distraction in travel, in the society of his friends, having meanwhile given instructions to his lawyer that the little nest of a house which held such bitter-sweet memories for him should be put on the market and sold. He felt he might never have the heart or the courage to enter it again; every stone of its walls seemed to hurt him, to cry aloud his

never-ending loss—almost as poignantly as did those other heart-breaking reminders, the empty habiliments, the dear dainty dresses, the bits of silk and lace and prettiness in which she had so often tricked herself out for his fond and appreciative eyes—till he felt he could never again bear to look on the place or enter its doors.

Yet had he been foolishly hasty after all, too cowardly alive to his own feelings and sensibilities? No other house could ever again give him the same sense of home-coming as did this dear, old-fashioned, unpretentious dwelling which had belonged to his dead mother; and which, had he thought longer on the matter, or been less selfishly absorbed in his own grief, might now with its wide lawns and sunny gardens make the sweetest of settings and the pleasantest of playgrounds for his little daughter. Ah, well, it was too late now, and perhaps it was just as well; old memories might come back, old wounds would reopen and hurt.

Here was the stile at whose side he had first been made certain of the wonderful truth that his Alice loved him; there was the flower-strewn path at the edge of the corn-fields over which they had so often walked hand in hand together when the



day's work was done and his harvesters gone home. For in those far-off happy days Sir Gilbert had been a plain country gentleman not so plentifully endowed with this world's goods as to be able, even had he been willing, to pay an overseer to look after his men.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind he had already come in sight of the house itself. There it was, lying pleasantly in the midst of its many green fields, with its low wide windows looking ever southward toward the sun, and the tall poplars standing like a row of sentinels behind it, and the lovely old-world garden leaning down toward the turf-tinted, trout-filled river, on whose banks he had spent so many long, happy days of boyhood.

Almost unconsciously, he had brought the car to a sudden standstill, while a wave of varied emotions passed over his saddened, mobile face. There was that in the wistfulness of his regard that filled the child beside him with a puzzled wonderment.

"What is it, daddy? What is it you see?" she asked, and the question brought the man back to earth with a sudden jerk.

"Nothing, my pet; at least, I was only looking at

that house yonder." Some impulse moved him to lift the child high in his arms.

"You see it, Alice? It is Deansgrange, the house you were born in, the house your dear mother died in." A mist blurred his eyes, and the words came huskily.

"Oh, daddy, what a sweet old house, with all those flowers about it! I should love to go up to the door, and see it more closely. Could we do that, do you think?"

Sir Gilbert shook his head. Yet, after all, why should they not, since the child wished it?

"Who owns it now, daddy?"

"Some lady—I don't quite remember the name. She had just come home from India at the time of—at the time that Mr. Burton sold it for me."

"She wouldn't mind our asking to see the place, would she, dad? I'd so love to walk through that lovely garden and lean over that little bridge, and then go in and see the inside of the house—if she'd allow us."

"We'll ask her, Alice," Sir Gilbert said with a sudden resolve. It was never very easy to resist his little girl's pleading, and all at once he himself felt conscious of an overwhelming desire to

revisit his old home, even if the memory of it should torture him anew.

At the little creeper-covered lodge standing close at hand, he made inquiries concerning the name of the new owner.

"Mrs. Fitzgerald—" Ah, of course, how stupid of him not to have remembered. He believed he had some letters of the lady still lying among his papers in reference to the purchase of the house and a portion of the lands about it.

A few minutes later he found himself standing, with an oddly beating heart, in the old-fashioned, low-ceiled, many windowed drawing-room of his boyhood's home. The dull green paper on its walls, the old china and pictures, and its quaint antique furnishing gave the room an altered air, and even to his mind, an added charm. On the piano the pages of a piece of music lay open as though its owner had just left it, a work-table stood near the blazing log-fire—for although late in May there was still a sharp nip in the air. Everything in the room held a delicate, intangible touch of womanliness and sweetness and refinement, the absence of which, in his latter-day semi-bachelor existence, he now fully realized, with a pang of regret.

When the door opened and a young and pretty woman entered, he felt all at once overcome with confusion.

"I'm afraid you will think this unpardonable," he stammered. "I called to ask you if you would mind our having a look about the place. My name is Grey—I lived here for the greater part of my life, and just now as we were passing in the motor my little daughter thought she would like to see the house in which she was born. You will not think it too great an intrusion, I hope?"

"Of course not," the lady assured him with a smile. There was something about the smile, something, too, about the fair, delicately tinted face with its quiet, sweet expression, that reminded him with a sudden swift thrill, half-pain, half-pleasure, of the wife he had lost. He had expected, he hardly knew why, to find Mrs. Fitzgerald an elderly, careworn-looking woman, the mother of a family—he dimly remembered something about her having a delicate boy on whose account she had come home from India, and for whose sake she had been willing to leave everything and bury herself here in the heart of the country. But instead of being elderly or even middle-aged, he found her quite young, beautiful,

too, despite a slight air of sadness, with those dark eyes, and the clear roseleaf complexion, and the soft mass of golden hair that crowned her shapely head.

"You are Sir Gilbert Grey, then?" she asked. "I believe my brother knew you before he went to India. I often heard him speak of his friend Gilbert Grey in the old days."

"What was your brother's name?" Sir Gilbert inquired.

"Jack Fitzgerald—everybody called him 'Jack.' He died a short time after going out, just within two years of his marriage."

A look of enlightenment followed quickly by a shade of sadness passed over her listener's face.

"Ah, yes!" he said. "Poor old Jack! How sorry we all felt at hearing of his death! He was my greatest chum at college. But I thought you were Mrs. Fitzgerald—the lodgekeeper told me—but perhaps I misunderstood her?"

"No, I am *Miss* Fitzgerald," she corrected, with a smile. And then her face also clouded. "My widowed sister-in-law did reside here with me in the beginning. But she is dead these three years; she never got over the shock of my brother's death, I think."



“And you live here by yourself? Isn’t it lonely for you?”

Her face brightened.

“It would be, if I hadn’t Jack. He is my brother’s only child, and such a dear boy. In the beginning, after Amy died, it did seem very desolate, but now I have grown to love the place and should not care to leave it. And the country is so good—absolutely necessary, in fact, for my nephew’s health. He had been very delicate, but is now growing much stronger. He is off fishing down the river this morning. But see, here he comes—empty-handed, too, I’m afraid.”

Just then a tall and handsome, but somewhat fragile-looking lad of ten or twelve years, clad in a suit of rough homespun, passed by the window and a moment later entered the room.

“I got two trout, Aunt Mavis,” he said. “I gave them to Bridget as I passed the kitchen. I might have caught more, but when I heard the hoot of a motor coming up the carriage drive, of course I had to come and see it,” he admitted, with a smile.

“Would you care for a drive in it, Jack?” Sir Gilbert asked, as he took the boy’s hand in his and looked kindly down at the bright frank young



face. "So you are poor Jack Fitzgerald's son. You have your father's eyes, at any rate, my lad," he added.

Just then at Sir Gilbert's suggestion a movement was made, and the whole party went out for a tour round the garden. Jack and little Alice ran gayly on in front, while their elders walked more soberly behind. The place seemed little changed to Sir Gilbert, yet filled with sad memories as it was, the sight of each dear, familiar object brought him far less regret and dejection of spirit than he had thought they would. There were the two great bushes of hydrangea which he himself had planted as a boy at either side of the hall door; here were also the trailing wreaths of woodbine which he had trained with his own hands to encircle the low windows in the front part of the house. Old Mrs. Grey had been a great flower-lover, and her son had inherited similar tastes; so that the whole garden was a place of wonderful beauty and sweetness, such a rare, old-world garden as it takes long years and many generations to create. The pink peonies and the rhododendrons were in flower, deep crimson and yellow roses were already budding on the lawn, and mingled with clematis and jessamine hung on the ancient moss-

grown and fern-covered walls. And by the time they had visited the green-houses and passed over the rustic bridge and returned again to the house through a little shrubbery filled with lilac and laburnum, syringa and fuchsia and a host of other flowering trees, Alice's little hands had been filled by her young escort with a greater wealth of beautiful flowers than they could very well hold.

Before making a final departure, and while Alice drank some of the milk and ate the biscuits which Miss Fitzgerald insisted on setting before her, Sir Gilbert, as he had promised, took the boy into the car and brought him for a quick spin down a mile or so of road and back again.

"You must let me come and take him for a longer run another day," he said on their return, looking from the boy's eager, excited face to that of his hostess with a confident appeal. "May I?" he asked.

"It would be awfully good of you, I'm sure. Jack doesn't get enough fun or amusement for a boy of his age, I often fear," Mavis Fitzgerald said, gratefully and a little wistfully.

After that it came to be quite a usual and expected thing that Sir Gilbert's motor should drive up to the door of Deansgrange at least once and

very often two or three times each week for the purpose of taking Master Jack for a spin. Sometimes Miss Fitzgerald allowed herself to be persuaded to join the party, and Sir Gilbert noted with a feeling of gladness the bright light of youthful happiness which now shone in her eyes, taking the place of the sober, wistful, half-lonely look which had too long lain there.

On these occasions Miss Fitzgerald would have it that her visitors should remain for lunch or tea—dinner being too late a meal, since there was the long drive back to town to be got safely over ere Alice's bedtime. Very slowly, but very surely, Sir Gilbert's sorrow was forgotten, his old wound healed by the gracious presence and companionship of this sweet, fair-haired woman whose eyes greeted his coming now with such a glad light of welcome. It was not that he was unfaithful, or forgetful of his first love, but—he was still young, very human, and very, very lonely; and his heart turned with a wistful longing toward the home of his youth and this dear, loving, lovable woman who might be a mother to his little girl—the mother of his children yet to come.

“Jack is looking ever so much stronger lately, don't you notice?” he asked of Mavis Fitzgerald

as they sat together in the garden one afternoon while the children chased butterflies.

"He hardly looks the same boy, I think," she answered gladly. "Alice's companionship has done him an amount of good. The boy was lonely."

Sir Gilbert threw away the end of his cigar.

"And you, too, were lonely, is it not so?" he asked, turning and gazing straight into those candid eyes with a sudden tenderness. "You look ever so much brighter and happier, lovelier, too, if possible, these last few weeks; and it gives me pleasure to think that we—that perhaps I—have helped you a little. You can not imagine the great difference it has all made to me, Mavis,—may I not call you so? Your friendship and the renewal of my old life here seem to have made an altogether new man of me. Listen to those children!" as a fresh shout of joy assailed their ears across the lawn. "It would be a thousand pities if they should be separated. But they needn't be, after all? Need they—dear?"

He had taken her hand in his own, and she did not withdraw it. And as he looked into her eyes again something he read in their depths reassured him, for he lifted the little soft hand to his lips and kissed it tenderly, gratefully.

# The Ordeal of Amy Stuart

BY KARL KLAXTON

## I

IT was 10 A.M. before the raising of the blinds announced that Amy Drewe was getting up. In poured the impatient sun, with hot rebuke for her laziness. Madge Fleming was stroking the recently uncovered bed, Hilda Dent examining a breakfast-tray perilously balanced on a heap of books, papers, ribbons, gloves, and half a girl's wardrobe in need of buttons.

"Disgraceful!" murmured Madge. "These sheets are as warm as toast."

"As *this* toast?" queried Hilda. "It has been let go as cold as ice."

"What does it mean?" asked Madge, with playful sternness.

"That I am sick of work," spluttered Amy, rosy and dripping, from the wash-basin. "No writing for me to-day!"

"But," Hilda remonstrated, "*The Trumpet Call* is relying on your promised article. The editor asked us to hurry you up with it."



Amy grimaced behind her towel. "He must wait for it," she said saucily. "I am independent of him now, and of all his tribe."

"You ungrateful girl! But how are you independent?"

"I have promised to marry a man who can keep me."

"*Amy!*" Madge's shrill voice rose to a scream.

"I suppose it is Julian Vane," said Hilda coldly.

Amy's rosy cheeks flamed scarlet. "It is Dr. Ronald Stuart," she replied.

Hilda shook with incredulous laughter.

"Oh, Amy," cried Madge, "you are joking!"

"Why joking?" Amy was getting nettled.

"But your theories," said Hilda sarcastically, "about twin souls and affinities! You don't expect us to believe that you think Ronald Stuart your affinity? What affection could exist between you? You would quarrel—he would never tolerate your disregard of conventionalities. And when you weren't quarreling, you would be bored to death. As well call fire and water affinities."

Amy shrugged her shoulders. "We have been friends from childhood," she said, "I could trust him in any trouble, and his practice is the best in Boston. Though well paid for my articles, I



am unable to save. Most of what I earn goes to mother, who—you know how extravagant and exacting she is—is always complaining that I send her too little. What would become of her if I fell ill? Save—I can not make ends meet. My landlady's face is a reminder that my rent is now weeks overdue. More than one man would offer me help if I needed it, but Ronald is the only one from whom I could take it. Better let him keep me as his wife than have to—beg from him.”

Hilda was amused. “What a worldly-wise little girl it is!” she said.

“He has promised mother an allowance,” Amy went on. “What a difference it will make to my writing! I shall do far better work with my time my own, and no wolf howling round the door.”

“You will write,” said Madge tartly, “either differently or not at all. Mrs. Stuart will never be allowed to publish the opinions now aired by Miss Drewe. If we, who have some sympathy with your views, think you often push them too far, Ronald will consider them outrageous. And he will stop your going to the Society.”

“Will he?” pouted Amy. “He won't even try. He worships me and will give me my way in everything. If he doesn't, I shall take it. I——”

"Excuse me," interrupted Hilda. "I am married and know what husbands are. They judge the wives who bear their names very differently from the girl-friends of their bachelor days. If Dr. Stuart worships you, he will be all the more anxious to make you what he thinks you ought to be. His face is fine-cut and kind, but notice how massive it seems to grow when he is roused. Even in repose it suggests the strongest determination of all—that of conscience. Be prepared, my girl, for—your master."

"Master?" flashed Amy. "It will be I who will master him."

"Ho, ho! A baby like you? He will *whip* you."

This sally restored good humor. Amy joined merrily in the laugh against herself. She loved being petted as a child, and as she coiled her hair it was hard to believe that she had seen twenty-four years. Her neck and arms were those of a girl in her teens, her shoulders almost babyish in their dimpled roundness. Not that this detracted from her prettiness; it added to it the charm of a playful, childlike innocence. When the engagement was announced, many a good man envied Ronald Stuart the happiness of maturing so sweet a rosebud.

## II

Dr. Stuart touched nothing of his dinner except the white wine, and that he merely sipped.

"I wish," snapped Amy, "you would not stare so."

He started. Unconscious that his gaze was fixed on his wife, he had not observed her chafing. His gray eyes softened with apology. The softening galled Amy to anger. She mistook it for the compassion one gives to a headstrong chit who is too old for needed correction.

"Which of my shortcomings," she flashed, "is on its trial now?"

"I was thinking," he replied quietly, "what a child you look to-night."

For all his tone betrayed, he was simply trying to turn away her wrath with the soft answer of compliment to her youthfulness. But if such were the case, he forgot that words borrow meaning from circumstances. The circumstance to-night was not an indulgent woman-friend, but a critical husband. Her toes danced a tattoo on the carpet, her fingers ground the bread beside her to crumbs.

"I look a child," she retorted, "to you. That is because you mistake me for one. I was warned before we married that you would not allow me to

call my soul my own. I am younger than you, but in many respects a woman's mind develops more quickly than a man's. The development is none the less real because old-fashioned masculine prejudice is too blind to see it. I had opportunities of development, heaven knows, before I tied myself to you. Why did I throw them away for—bondage?"

The silence that followed this outburst was like a highly charged atmosphere. A flash of lightning would hardly have been surprising. Ronald smoked a cigarette with fitful puffs like the gusts that precede a storm. Amy watched the massiveness steal into his face, saw the suggestion of power pass beyond a hint. As a hint it had never alarmed her—the kindness in the eyes had told of infinite forgiveness. But now the eyes were stern, and the lines of duty and self-control stood out clear and hard. For all her defiance, she felt the dread of a child who has thrown a lighted match and knows not what may take fire. But a sardonic amusement was mingled with her fear. She likened him to a man whom she had lately seen lash a jibbing mare into submission, and a peal of mocking laughter escaped her lips. To her surprise, it relieved the tension. Had he known

what had provoked the laughter, Ronald would have been too much hurt to smile. Amy had remembered Hilda Dent's jest that he would whip her.

In vain the pitiless electric lamps looked for a flaw in her appearance. Her russet-brown hair was streaked indeed, but with a network of pure gold; her complexion was roses and milk and the bloom of the peach; the blues of her eyes and her cornflower silk harmonized perfectly. If her puckered brows and pursed lips suggested a spoiled child, spoiled children often look their prettiest in the sulks.

Ronald dared not dwell on her prettiness. It made his projected task more difficult. Once more he scanned her face, but only for its indications of character. Eyes, nose, and forehead, all showed striking ability, enlivened by the wit that had delighted the readers of *The Trumpet Call*. But he fixed his attention on the wilful mouth and chin. They betrayed unformed judgment, ungoverned feeling, obstinacy, lack of self-control.

In days gone by her grandmother had said, "That girl needs a strong hand. May her father be long spared to look after her." Ronald wondered what that wise old woman would have said



of her granddaughter now. Probably, he thought, something like this: "That woman's cleverness is a danger to her, because she does not know how to use it. It was a great misfortune that she was left at twelve to the care of a weakly, indulgent mother. Her nature is undisciplined; she has brains but lacks character. Her mind is well developed, but her judgment is at the mercy of her impulses, and she has no will-power to keep her wilfulness in check. Her standard of life and conduct is not duty, but what pleases her. She is too old now to learn from anything but experience. God must take her in hand, humble her pride, discipline her with some sorrow brought on by her own folly. He will find her stubborn to deal with. Divine wisdom alone can choose for her an ordeal that will purify her nature without injuring it."

God! Divine wisdom! What was putting such ideas into his head to-night?

He had been brought up a strict Protestant, but the faith of his boyhood had given no answer to the Agnostic arguments with which his scientific training had confronted him. His belief in a personal God had gradually been sapped, he had rejected the supernatural. But his code of natural



ethics was a lofty one. The soul of honor, he shrank from untruth and meanness; his kindness to the poor would have put much so-called Christian charity to the blush. To his many clerical acquaintances, Father Ryan excepted, his high moral character was a puzzle. It seemed to have no adequate basis.

But from her place in heaven, Amy's grandmother, whom he had respected and loved from childhood, could have told how sufficient the cause of his uprightness was. The Christian influences of his youth had never been wholly shaken off, but had remained, unsuspected by him, to color his natural religion. And on her death-bed, Mrs. Drewe, knowing that his faith was failing, had made him promise to pray. Partly from affection for her memory, partly because the fulfilment of a pledge was a necessity of his moral nature, he had kept that promise. It had been hard to reconcile prayer with his philosophy; he had succeeded by making it conditional—by praying to the God in whom Mrs. Drewe had believed, if such a Deity existed. Thus, like the Athenians addressed by St. Paul, he had worshiped the "unknown God." And God, who saw beneath his Agnostic speculations a childlike readiness to em-

brace the truth should he ever know it, had blessed his homage with the grace that fertilizes every spring of action.

Ronald checked his own meditation impatiently. What was the idea of God doing in his mind? He was no old woman who had never questioned what she had learned when in bibs and tuckers, but a scientist, a thinker, a logical sifter of evidence. How could a mere hypothesis, at variance with every conclusion of modern thought, help either Amy or him?

He turned with relief to Mrs. Drewe's favorite maxim that heaven helps those who help themselves. It was unsatisfactorily stated—as used by her, it assumed the existence of God. But he needed help—help to help Amy. Her ordeal was at hand—he could see it coming. It was his duty as her husband to save her from irreparable folly, from wrecking irretrievably her own happiness and his. He knew she would not be guided. Hardly a woman in body, she was a child in character; a woman in mind, she was a child in perception of the true meaning of life. With such a child, mistrustful and sullenly resentful, he would have to be not only husband but master.

The lines on his forehead deepened, his face

went ashen gray. The rôle of master was the most distasteful that fate could have chosen for him. Could he play it successfully? She might leave him. He dared not drive her to that; her faults were dearer to him than any other woman's virtues could have been. And—can a glass rod be bent without breaking? What could human tact do with a girl who viewed every overture as the velvet glove on a hand of steel? His task was impossible, unless—alas, for his philosophy!—he received more than human aid. He buried his face in his hands and breathed a prayer—to the unknown God.

### III

How she remained at the table so long, Amy did not know. She waited feverishly for eight to strike, then tried to hurry from the room.

“Stay,” said Ronald, shaken for the moment out of his external calm. “I want a word with you in my smoking-room.”

Though hot all over, Amy shivered. That tone, vibrant with suppressed emotion, reminded her of her dead father's “Go upstairs, miss, and wait till I can attend to you.” But this self-contained husband of hers was more formidable than her

father had been; he kept his temper better and put her more convincingly in the wrong. Could she only have guessed what fear of her was making him shrink from the interview!

"My meeting," she snapped, "is at 8.30."

"I shall not keep you five minutes," he said, "if you will listen to reason."

Amy shrugged her shoulders and followed him to what he often called his "den." She told herself mockingly that the term was an apt one.

"Ah," he began with forced ease, "the coffee is already here. You take no milk, I believe."

"And"—her voice seemed to freeze—"no coffee, either."

"As you will. That easy-chair is most comfortable."

But she remained standing. "I have no time to lose," she reminded him.

He took a review from the table. "I have a question to ask," he said, "about an article in this."

She answered the question before it had been put, by trying to snatch the paper from him. Her attempt failed, and she gazed angrily at finger-marks on her arm.

"This paper," he said calmly, as if nothing had happened, "claims to be the literary organ of a

society to which, in spite of my express wish, you continue to belong. But let that pass. An article entitled 'The Tyranny of the Law' bears the pseudonym *Sigma*, under which you used to write for *The Trumpet Call*. Is that article yours?"

She drew herself up to her full height of five feet, her eyes aflame with defiance. "It is very honorable of you," she sneered, "to go prying in my boudoir."

His hand fell with a stinging slap on her lace-clad shoulder. She winced. "You consider it manly," she fumed, "to strike a woman?" But she looked for no apology; she knew he had not intended a blow. Her insinuation had provoked violence in an involuntary gesture.

"A man," he replied with some heat, "may surely enter his wife's apartment without being suspected of prying. I was looking for *The Lancet*, which you took from this room yesterday during my absence. I picked this up by accident, and its title, *The New Millennium*, caught my eye. Most of it is harmless, but *Sigma's* article shocked me."

"I do not write," she sneered again, "for prudes."



“Nor for ordinarily right-minded people. Listen to this paragraph:

“Old-world conventions have taught us to mistake the ceremonies and forms of marriage for marriage itself. A man and woman enter a church, verbal promises are given and received, and a clergyman declares the couple husband and wife. But these formalities, whatever their utility may be, are quite outside that inner contract between soul and soul in which the essence of marriage lies. The essence of marriage—its sole root-bond—is *mutual affection*. There is thus no such thing as loveless or one-sided marriage, or marriage purely for money or for a home or for any like selfish motive. Such are marriages only in name, mere forms with no inward significance. Nothing can exist without its essence; there can be no marriage without mutual affection. The tyranny of the law lies in its demand for proofs that a seriously made promise has been a mistake. It compels a girl who has from mistaken impulse given her untutored heart to a man unsuited to her, to remain in bondage unless she can convince a divorce court. That court will grant a divorce only on certain specified grounds, and, unless she

can prove that such exist for her petition, she is doomed to fail. And, even if they exist, her womanliness may shrink from the public exposure that appearance in a divorce court entails. Yet, all the while, she is really divorced; the cessation of her affection, even for no better reason than that her husband has inculpably failed to hold her heart, has deprived the marriage of its essence. If she leaves her husband (husband only in name), the law still holds her bound to him; it will not let her marry her affinity. But, my sisters, this tyranny, so hard on women because, from the greater complexity of their nature, they are more liable than men to misread their own hearts, will end. The better understanding of social problems, the broadening of ethical systems, the stirrings of our aspirations to rational freedom, are hastening the New Millennium. The law of that era will demand no exposure of conjugal miseries; it will recognize that the mere unhappiness which leads a woman to *desire* a divorce is a sufficient reason for granting it. It will see that its sole function in the matter is to give external sanction to the inner divorce which has already taken place. And when public opinion is so educated that such a law will be possible, no social odium will follow

divorce. Woman will then be free. There will be no irreparable mistakes, no wreckings of a life's happiness, such as appal us now. A girl will be able to learn wisdom from a mistake, and also to remedy it; no false first or second step will prevent her union with her affinity when she meets him. The cardinal truth of affinities, that for every soul created there exists a twin soul in a body of opposite sex, and that between such souls alone can the Roman Catholic ideal of indissoluble marriage be realized, is dimly recognized by the saying 'Marriages are made in heaven.' In the *New Millennium* the truth, now seen 'darkly and as in a glass,' will be beheld 'face to face.' "

"Were I to read this heresy," said Ronald, "in the light of some remarks you have made to me lately, I might wonder what you thought of your relation to me."

Amy went white to the lips. She looked like a hunted animal at bay.

"It may be unfair," he continued, "to give the question you have raised so personal a turn. Perhaps you were considering it entirely in the abstract. But such articles as this are often misunderstood; they are mistaken for autobiography."

She maintained a gasping silence.

"This," he went on, "is simply a re-hash of old paganism. You call it modern, but it helped to ruin ancient Greece and Rome. It crops up in every age because there are always people for whom liberty means license, and it is always dangerous. If you amateur philosophers had studied history, you would know that the sanctity of the marriage tie is society's most necessary safeguard."

"Amateur philosophers," stung Amy to the quick. "Heresy—sanctity of the marriage tie!" she gibed. "Father Ryan is evidently too clever for you. You talk so much like a Roman Catholic that I wonder you do not become one."

Ronald looked as if he were getting the worst of the encounter. When he spoke again, his tone had lost its sharpness.

"Much as I dissent from Father Ryan's first principles," he confessed, "he has modified my views on many points. His views on marriage strongly appeal to me; I can not controvert them, because they are confirmed by my own experience. My profession confronts me with the evils to which not only divorce, but the mere possibility of it, leads."

"Father Ryan!" she laughed. "A priest, a pro-

fessional upholder of world-enslaving superstitions! What is his opinion worth, beside that of a man like—like——”

“Like Julian Vane?” he suggested.

“Yes,” she retorted, “like Julian Vane.”

It was now Ronald’s lip that curled with scorn. “The President of your precious society?” he asked. “The man described in fashionable ladies’ papers as an Adonis and a Greek god? I grant you he is handsome—in a weak, womanish sort of way; but that is all. As for his mind, his plays—nasty problem-plays—tell me more than I care to know about it. And that is the man from whom you get inspiration to write dangerous nonsense like this?”

“You need not be jealous,” she said bitterly. “I am drawn to him only by his sympathy with what I believe to be my mission in life. I had hoped for sympathy from you, but you refused it. We were no sooner married than you forbade me to write for *The Trumpet Call*, and——”

“Doesn’t this article justify me?”

“And you ordered me to give up the Philosophical and Ethical Society. I met you half-way—no theory of wifely duty could demand more—by deserting *The Trumpet Call*. That was a



greater sacrifice than you could imagine; it cut me off from that wider public of women whose education is my vocation. But, like all your masterful sex, you would accept no compromise——”

“That society,” he said, “is where you have learned your wrong ideas.”

“That society,” she replied, “is now my only intellectual life. And whatever husbands may say, a woman’s intellectual life is her own. You deny me all right to think, you treat me as a child. What would the editor of *The Trumpet Call* think if I told him why I have discontinued my articles?”

“The editor is a business man. He found you pushed into vogue by your admirers and that you had the knack of amusing his readers. It paid him to flatter you.”

“Flatter?” she cried. “Our society is admittedly the most cultured set in Boston——”

“And agrees with him that a precocious, self-opinionated girl, with a ready pen and a smattering of journalistic training, is a philosophical genius and the ablest woman-thinker of her time! Had you been less attractive, my dear, you would not have found a pedestal so easily. A certain

section of the world loves to spoil a grown-up child."

This answer drove Amy to fury. "What exchange have you offered," she stormed, "for the sacrifice you ask of me? Can I coop myself up with you and take my opinions from you as a baby takes milk from a spoon? Your notions, especially those on woman's sphere and mission, are so antiquated that rational discussion is impossible. Because I can not go back to the century before last, every argument ends in a wrangle. Oh, I am miserable!"

Ronald's face suddenly softened. The clouds of anger dispersed, and a sad tenderness took their place. He folded her in his arms and kissed her.

"God," he said—he was growing strangely familiar with the word—"will before long, I hope, bless our life with its real interest. That will give you your true mission, help us to understand each other better, bind us more closely together."

She struggled from him with revulsion. "Only men," she cried, "talk like that. They twaddle about the domestic virtues! They exalt them only to keep women in bondage. But I can not stay longer. Good-night!"

She swept past him, and he sank into a chair. A minute later, he heard the sound of departing wheels. He went at once to bed, but was summoned, before he could sleep, to the hospital. He spent the night in watching the crisis of a case of fever. On his return, his man handed him a letter. "Mrs. Stuart," the latter said, "came back at one, but went away at once. She told me to give you this at daylight." Ronald rushed to his room and tore open the envelope.

"DEAR RONALD," he read. "Good-by. I have gone away with Julian Vane; *he* is my affinity. If you are tempted to think unkindly of last night, remember that you struck me. My last request is that you will free me in the eyes of the law. Divorce is easily obtained in America.

"AMY DREWE."

The room revolved, the pattern of the wall paper danced. But Ronald pulled himself together and took his usual morning bath. When dressed, he rang for the upper housemaid. "Mary," he said calmly, "will you act as housekeeper during your mistress' absence? She has gone on a long visit to friends."

## IV

It was midnight. With weak and painful step, a woman struggled along the wind-swept embankment. From time to time she stopped to gaze around her, at the lights of St. Louis behind, at the restless sky overhead, at the moon-flecked Mississippi beside her. She looked longest at the river. The glare of the city mocked her with a lost past, the scudding clouds seemed the driving of her heart's despair. But the waters, scarcely ruffled by the whirling gusts, offered her rest. The face of the woman with whom she collided was as wretched and hopeless as her own. Kate Rafferty had also been gazing at the waters.

"Why are you here?" gasped Amy. Her own strait gave her intuition of the other's purpose.

"Trying to get courage," was the fierce reply, "to end my misery there."

Amy dragged her from the edge and shook her. "You wicked woman!" she cried, as if no such temptation had passed through her own mind.

"I am beside myself," moaned Kate. "Oh, why did I leave my husband, who was so good to me? Curses on *The Trumpet Call* and that hateful woman *Sigma*, whose articles first put wrong ideas into my head. May God punish her——"

Amy put up her hands as if to ward off a blow. "Don't," she shrieked. "He has punished me enough. *I am Sigma.*"

Kate clutched her and turned her face to the moonlight. The cry of penitence had melted her anger; the drawn, wasted features compelled forgiveness. With the pity of one unhappy woman for another, she kissed the thin, blanched lips.

"Come with me," she said. "I have a shelter, if not a home. We will help each other."

\* \* \* \* \*

Father Ryan of Boston was giving a Lenten mission in St. Louis. A crowd of eager listeners was assembled for the evening sermon. At the back of the church, between a woman and a man, sat Amy. The woman held a baby in her arms. Throughout the sermon Amy wept bitterly. The preacher dealt with the causes of unhappiness in married life.

"A woman once told me," he said, "that her marriage was a failure. Disagreements had arisen; she and her husband had drifted apart. She blamed her husband's masterfulness; he would not let her do something on which she had set her heart. I saw a young, inexperienced girl with wilfulness writ large on every feature of her face.



I knew her husband to be a good, conscientious man, and that he worshiped the very ground on which she walked. I found that what she wished to do was something of which no good husband could approve. He could not give way, and she would not. Instead of listening to reason, she behaved like a spoiled child and obstinately persisted in her course. I warned her of the harm she was doing, but she would have her own way. Bitter experience brought her to her senses, but not until she had well-nigh wrecked both her own life and that of the man who loved her better than she loved herself."

The woman with the baby handed her burden to the man and caught Amy, who had all but fainted. After Benediction, Amy and her companions were left alone in the church. Presently Father Ryan came from the sacristy and beckoned the party to the baptismal font.

"The parish priest is on a sick-call," he explained, "and asked me to perform this baptism for him."

The sacrament administered, the priest led the way to the sacristy. "The child's name?" he asked, finding the place in the Register.

"Amy Drewe Stuart," was the reply.

"The father's name?"

"Ronald Stuart."

"The mother's—*your* name?"

"Amy Stuart. My maiden name was Drewe."

Father Ryan looked at her sharply, as he dipped his pen in the ink. His hand was unsteady, and he made a blot.

"The godfather's name?" he asked.

"John Rafferty."

"The godmother's?"

"Kate Rafferty."

\* \* \* \* \*

A scream, and a rush of people from both sides of the electric-lit street. A woman had been run over by a cab.

"She is fearfully injured," said one.

"Thank heaven," murmured another, "the child is unhurt."

"Run quick," cried a third, "for Dr. Stuart. That is his house—opposite."

It was Ronald himself for whom the crowd made way. But how changed! His once jet-black hair was almost white; the lines in his face, if softer, were deeper. The figure that had been so erect now stooped. Evidently the hand of sorrow had fallen heavily on him.

“Hospital?” he exclaimed. “She would die before she could get there. Bring her as gently as you can into my house.”

“Mrs. Quinn”—this to his housekeeper, who was standing scared in the doorway—“a woman has been knocked down and must be brought here. You won’t mind looking after the child? It appears to be about fifteen months old. I must telephone for nurses at once.”

“Och, the darlint!”

Mrs. Quinn was a kindly old soul, brisk and alert for her years. She had been Ronald’s nurse, and had come back to him after the breaking-up of his home. The sight of the baby warmed her heart and brought the mother-light to her eyes.

“Mind?” she muttered. “As if I would mind anything the master wanted me to do. I only wish I had a child of his to look after, God bless him.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“My poor pet, I have found you at last.”

“Hush!” said the doctor. “I can not allow you to speak to her.”

But nothing could restrain Kate Rafferty, who rushed to the bed and threw herself beside the bandaged woman. “Did she think I had forgotten

her?" she crooned as if humoring a sick child. "I have come every day, but they would not let me see you."

"That is enough, my good woman," said Ronald, wondering who she could be. "Is she a great friend of yours?"

"Indeed, yes, sir," Kate answered. "She saved my life and took me back to my husband whom I had left, God bless her."

"Amen!" said Ronald fervently. "But if you want her to get well, leave her before she recognizes you. The least excitement might prove fatal."

As the woman grew better, the mystery surrounding her deepened. Mrs. Quinn was perplexed. The nurses had gone, and the sick-room was in her charge. But she had been strictly ordered not to divulge her master's name to the patient. And the nearer Amy drew to convalescence, the more rarely Ronald went to see her. As long as she had been at the best only semi-conscious, he had attended to her himself—attended, too, with such loving care that soon, except a slight difficulty in walking and a scar fortunately hidden by her hair, no trace of the accident would remain. But, lately, his partner, Dr. Pratt,

had taken charge of her. Ronald feared the consequences of her recognizing him before she was strong enough to bear the shock. He stole in daily to see her, but only when assured that she was asleep. She was sleeping now. He, sitting by the dressing-table, was examining two photographs. Both pictures were old, one was much faded. Presently Mrs. Quinn, with the baby in her arms, stepped in on tiptoe.

"There, sir," she said. "I have just washed and dressed her. Doesn't she look pretty?"

The child crowed with delight and stretched out its hands.

"Come," whispered Ronald, and little Amy nestled in her father's arms.

Mrs. Quinn smiled. "May she stay with you a moment, sir?" she asked. "The butcher has just called, and I ought to see him."

Though Ronald had not perceived it, Amy was now awake. Her heart almost leaped to her mouth; with difficulty she held back a cry. Before her was her lost husband and, on his knee, his—her child. She prayed that he had not recognized her. Through her half-closed eyelids she watched him compare each of the photographs with her baby's face. His countenance was aglow with



a joy too deep, too holy, for words. A deep-drawn breath startled him. He looked at her sharply, but her eyes were shut. Then, gathering up the child, he hurried from the room. In his anxiety to get away unobserved, he had left the photographs on the table. A minute later, they were in her hands.

She recognized them at once; they were treasured portraits of his mother and sister at little Amy's age. Her own babe, so strong was the likeness, might have sat for either picture.

This explanation of his look of joy alarmed her. It told her that he knew who she was. Her one idea now was to escape from the house. Though a meeting with Ronald was what her whole being had hungered for, though a yearning to sue on her knees for pardon had brought her to St. Louis, she could not face the man whom she had wronged. That whitened hair, that sorrow-lined brow, told of sin too deep for forgiveness. He would forgive her, she knew; that face, kind before, was all kindness now. But to hear from those lips the word she had spurned and for which her heart was now starving, to be clasped by those arms from which she had struggled and which were now her only haven of rest, to feel those caresses which

she had scorned and of which the bare memory now made her pulses thrill: it would kill her—sharpen her remorse to death-agony, crush her with her unworthiness and shame. She must get up and go—that very night.

Gratefully she remembered Dr. Pratt's promise that she should sit up for an hour next day. Mrs. Quinn had heard that promise. If only she could be induced to let her have her clothes.

"These," said the housekeeper, "are what master said you were to have. He didn't say you were to have them to-morrow, but I suppose it will be all right."

"There are no shoes," Amy objected.

"Will you want them? Your feet will be too tender."

"Bring them. It will be well to get used to wearing them."

Amy sank back, almost fainting. What were these? Not the rags in which she had been knocked down, but clothes she had worn in Boston as Ronald Stuart's wife.

Mrs. Quinn had blundered fearfully. Dr. Pratt's intention had been that Amy should sit up in a dressing-gown.

Amy overslept herself. No one was stirring yet,

but dawn was beginning to break. Unless she made haste, the chance would be lost. Impatient with the light and still more so with her own weakness, she struggled painfully into the garments. She dared not look closely at them; they were marked with the name she had lost. Too much exhausted to lace the shoes, she left the strings hanging round her ankles. The door opened without a creak, and she staggered to the banister. The pile of the carpet muffled her tread; no fear of being heard checked her speed. She was too weak to do more than crawl. Her head felt lighter at every step. Her feet slid on the hall tiles. Then walls, ceiling, everything, vanished in a blur of blackness.

When she came to, she was rising—lifted up, up, up, till her face was close to Ronald's. He had let himself in with a latch-key after a weary night at the hospital. Did he kiss her? She could not even wonder. She had swooned again. With returning consciousness, dreams, such sweet dreams, floated through her brain. She was once more in her own, in Ronald's, house at Boston—in her own bed, in the dainty pale-green room which he had had fitted up with such loving regard to her tastes.

Where was she? She was broad awake, and the sunlight, softened by the olive-yellow blinds, was flooding the apartment. Yes, it was her own room, exactly as it used to be; her pictures hung in the same places on the walls; the arrangement of the furniture was unaltered, even her dressing-gown lay across the chair in the same folds as she had seen it last. And Ronald was bending over her, looking just as he had done on that sunny, happy morn after their wedding.

“Where am I?” she asked, bewildered. “Is this Boston?”

“No, darling,” he replied. “I could not stay there after. . . . But I kept your treasures—they are all here. And I had this room colored and fitted up just as you instructed me when. . . . It has been waiting for you, love, oh, so long. And now you have come.”

He smiled at her for a moment before going into her outstretched arms. Then their lips met in a kiss that satisfied the hunger of two weary years.

## V

“Believe me, Ronald, I did not leave Boston in company with Julian Vane.”

‘I believe you, dear. But—you left by the same train.’”

“That was all. When I wrote you that cruel note, I had promised to accompany him to Chicago. We met at the station, but the long wait for the train in the chill morning air cooled my rage and the fever of my blood. I was tortured with misgivings; your look when we parted—you had kissed me—haunted me in the waiting-room, on the platform, everywhere. I could not shut it out from my eyes.”

She broke into sobs, and Ronald begged her to desist.

“No, no,” she pleaded. “I want you to know how I have been punished and—how I found out that I loved you. When the train arrived, I told Julian that I could not travel in the same car with him. He was annoyed and, at Buffalo, where I saw him again, was just civil to me. At Chicago I told him that we must part, that I would not see him again until the divorce for which I had asked you had been made absolute. He was angry, but said finally that he loved me too much to disregard my wishes. What made me feel, Ronald, that I was still bound to you?”

“I think God’s answer to my prayers,” he an-



swered gravely. "How I prayed for you, dearest, that awful night! And I have prayed every night and day since."

"You, Ronald, *prayed?*" There was something of the child of old in her look of astonishment.

"Yes, but I will explain that later. Go on."

"What an answer those prayers had!" she exclaimed. "The awakening of my conscience and the finding of my heart! I had never known till then that I possessed either. Remember my bringing-up, and what a baby you married. In Chicago I was miserable, not because I regretted my firm stand, but because Julian Vane still held my promise to marry him. Conscience told me that I belonged to you, and my heart yearned more and more every day for what it had thrown away. So I wrote to him for an appointment, and he asked me by letter to call and see him. Imagine my shock at finding him married. He taunted me with my doctrine of affinities—it was his doctrine rather than mine—and jeered that as I had left you for my affinity, so he had discarded me for his. And he called me a worthless woman—said that having been false to you, I could be true to no one. I have often heard you praised, Ronald, but never in such extravagant terms as those which he

hurled in mockery at me. Then he summoned a maid-servant and told her to turn me out, bade her slam the door in my face if I called again! How my letter to you—it was heaven's retribution—came back to me then! The man for whose sake I wrote that letter, the man who had persuaded me to leave you, had me flung into the street because I was a better woman than he had thought me to be. Was I humbled? I was shamed, crushed, in despair. And, Ronald, I was *starving*."

Ronald's face went white, his eyes filled with tears. "My poor girl," he said, "how did you live all this time?"

"Well, I had brought some money with me—not much, for I was proud, and I thought I could support myself by writing. But when I tried to write, the ink dried on my pen. Your prayers must have held my old ideas back; I felt that they were wrong. I wrote on different lines, but the papers returned my manuscripts. *The Trumpet Call* sent me a curt note saying that its readers wanted my 'old stuff' and not 'goody-goody trash.' Some time before I saw Julian, he had sent me a check. I had intended to send it back, but mislaid it. The day after he turned me out, I found

and cashed it. Forgive me, Ronald—it was the bitterest drop in the cup of my humiliation. What could I do? I had received notice to quit my wretched lodging, and had not a cent. I told myself that necessity excused my borrowing the money for a time. I went to Boston, only to find that you had gone to St. Louis. I hurried here, ascertained your address, but could not face you. And the night before baby was born I went to the river to drown myself.”

“Spare yourself. Kate Rafferty told me that, and also how you took her back to her husband.”

“She had work as a typist, and I helped her. We earned very little, but it gave me bread. She and her husband were so kind. But for them baby must have died.”

Ronald was deeply moved. “They shall never want,” he said, “if I can help it.”

“They were Catholics and begged me to have baby baptized. I fought against it, but had to give in at last. Father Ryan, whom you knew in Boston, baptized her.”

“So our little darling is a Catholic. God be praised! I am a Catholic, too. I sought comfort for my desolate heart in all sorts of things, including religion. The latter helped me so much that

I examined the intellectual grounds for its claims. Father Ryan—I had heard he was here—answered all my objections and urged me to pray for the grace that could alone work my conversion. I obeyed, and all difficulties vanished. He baptized me one evening, just before his sermon.”

“A sermon on unhappiness in marriage?”

“Yes.”

“Our Amy,” she sobbed, “was baptized just after it.”

After a long pause she asked shyly, “You took no proceedings for divorce?”

“My dear, I couldn’t. I thought the matter over from all points of view, wondering if it would not be best to set you free. But my heart would have it that you would return in answer to my prayers.”

“What a mercy for me that you trusted God so!”

“I trusted you, too.”

“A divorce would——”

“Would have made no real difference. What God has joined together, no man can put asunder. The Catholic Church has always held to the indissolubility of marriage. She has been persecuted for it, been oppressed by the civil power in every age, but her teaching has never faltered.”

“Ronald,” said Amy solemnly, “I knew that truth before, and often wrote about it. But—I had never thought of either of us as Catholics—it strikes me now with a quite new force. Truly God leads souls to the light by means of their own experiences. The Catholic Church, you say, would have held me your lawful wife, no matter what my folly might have led me to do?”

“And I,” was the answer, “being a member of that Church, would have considered you such.”

“Oh, Ronald, the Church that teaches that must be the one true Church—the Church of God. What I have gone through is an overwhelming argument.”

“There are other arguments.”

“I know. The Catholic Church gave you comfort and support through all the dreadful trial that I brought on you. It gave faith and strength to say those prayers—the prayers that saved me. And you are no longer perplexed about religion; your mind, once tortured with intellectual doubts, is now at rest. That is enough for me. I must see a priest at once.”

“Darling, my happiness will soon be complete. But you must be a good girl and not get up until I declare you able. You shall not wait long.



Father Ryan will be here on Saturday. I have invited him to spend part of his holiday with us."

"What a happiness to be baptized by the priest who baptized you and baby! It will unite us yet more closely."

"Yes, love, but say no more now; you are tired. Come, kiss me and go to sleep."

And, looking more like a child than she had done for many sad months, she obeyed.

The following day Julian Vane was informed by his bankers that the sum of two hundred dollars had been paid into his account by Ronald Stuart.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What a lovely girl Miss Stuart is!"

"And as good as she is pretty. All the children of that family are good."

The speakers belonged to a congregation that was pouring out of a church after Mass.

"No wonder they are good. See what a good father they have!"

"Yes, and—what a good mother!"



# The Legend of Pont Aven

BY MARY O'CONNOR MAHONEY

THE scene of my story lies in the very prettiest little fishing-village off the coast of France. A small community of farmers, millers, fishermen, and peasants is its native population, a simple, kind, and honest people, but very superstitious. They have a weird old legend that is centuries old and believed in by old and young. Overhanging the sea is a large rock, called the Sea Gull's Rock, in which sea-gulls build their nests, and it is believed that if you make a wish for every egg you find in such a nest on the first day of May at sunrise, the wish will come true. But you must not even touch the eggs. If you do it will bring dire misfortune to you. The instant you see the egg, you must say, "Oh, bird of the air, oh, bird of the sea! I know my wish will come true to me."

It is the custom of these people to write out their wishes. The heading of these written slips reads: "My Heart's Desire." These little bits of paper must be guarded treasure-like, for, so the story

runs, if any but the writer knows the contents, the charm will be broken.

I see you smile, dear reader, but you would have only to spend one summer here and you, too, would fall under the spell, for the very air seems full of romance and witchery. Pont Aven is a loadstone to artists, and with the leafing of the trees they come in flocks from the Latin Quarter in Paris. Each year they seem to find new beauty in its old deserted abbeys and châteaux, its ancient chapel and old convent, the Mater Dolorosa, nestled in among the rocks at the foot of a hill.

And could I but describe Pont Aven justly! The wondrous beauty of its tall, silvery-leaved poplars; the quaint old stone mills, vine-covered and moss-grown; and the River Aven breaking through its narrow channel, dashing under bridges, over glistening rocks and turning numerous water-wheels, bubbling and sparkling in the sunshine like myriads of diamonds. Widening as it runs, the river spreads out into a large body of water, and this is the little port of Aven, just four miles from the sea. If ever there was a spot on earth where nature and art seemed combined for man's especial enjoyment, it must be at Pont Aven. No rigorous winter; it is so mild that one scarcely knows when

it has slipped its chain. Only at evening the salt breath from the sea seems softer and you say to yourself that spring must be close, and in a few days the buds on bush and tree open.

From the long hedges of young lime trees the heavy sweet lime flowers sway, giving their tribute of fragrance to mingle with that of fruit and flower blossom, and the magic beauty of the summer seems to leave its imprint on one's memory ever after. You need but to close your eyes to again behold its long, cool avenues of beech and chestnut trees, sycamore and linden and still more beautiful, but not so sheltering, the graceful acacia. From one of the avenues on the high ground leading to the ancient château you can trace the winding of the river far away toward the sea, where the white sails of the fishing-boats seem to pass in and out between the trees and fields, which slope gently down to the slate-roofed cottages built along the stream. Here pretty young girls and comely matrons, and matrons who are no longer young nor comely, may be seen washing among the stones, the peasant women still clinging to their picturesque costume, as they do to this ancient manner of washing. A path follows the stream for a mile or more, and on both sides groups of women are at



work. I watch a young girl stoop, letting the garment spread in the water, then rise, stooping again and plunging it into the clear water against the stones, the graceful motion of her body keeping time with the Breton air she is singing.

I have passed the last cottage and am a little puzzled as to the path which leads to my destination, trying to remember the directions given me by my host of the Hotel du Lion d'Or.

"If Madame would like to see one grand sight, she must follow the stream until she passes the last cottage, then go directly north to the cliff. Madame will find it difficult, but not dangerous to ascend to the summit of the cliff, and from its highest point, looking north, is the Druid's Baie de Trespass, where according to ancient legend the spirits of the departed wait on the shore to be taken in boats to the Isle de Sein."

"And have you, yourself, monsieur, ever seen these waiting spirits?" I asked.

"No, Madame, for I have never yet been on the cliff after sunset, and it is between sundown and twilight that they can be seen floating through the air, but ever hovering close to the shore."

I confess while my host was acquainting me with this bit of tradition a creepy, crawly feeling came

over me, but I replied in a nonchalant way; "I think, Monsieur, that I will keep that pleasure in store until I come again." My host smiled and the smile softened his rugged old face.

"Well," he continued, "the old Château de Rosseaur is less than half a league from where you leave the stream path, but you will have to climb a long, steep hill. If one were possessed of a pair of wings he might just soar down, but as you are not you must go slowly by a narrow stony path, and when once you reach level ground, you will be in the château grounds. Five minutes' walk through a small forest will bring you to a rose garden, which is said to be the most beautiful in all France."

"And, Monsieur," I asked, "are the people of Pont Aven so hospitable that one need not even ask permission to enter their private garden?"

"Well, madame, I can not answer for all Pont Aven, but for Madame de Rosseaur, I can," he replied.

At last I stepped from a fragrant, shadowy pine forest into the bright afternoon sunshine and what seemed to me a forest of roses. Such blending of colors! Under foot a soft velvety carpet of green;

overhead an azure blue sky, and the flowers, rainbow-like in color, between. One would know that a master-mind chose this spot for a rose garden, and that working in unison with the great Master, had placed it against a background more magnificent than could be made by human hands, a forest of tall sheltering pines to the west and to the north a high spreading cliff, where in its clefts little lilac primulas sprang up as if by magic, casting over it a purple glow.

I was enchanted by its beauty and grandeur. I said again and again, "I must go now," but still I lingered, although the sun went down. I watched it sinking behind the hills like a great ball of fire, and I knew that in a little while the soft hazy twilight would fall over Pont Aven, and that the gray mist that rises up from the sea would cover it as with a mantle. I was some two miles from home, or from the Hotel du Lion d'Or, which to me meant home during my brief stay in Pont Aven. My face was turned toward it at last, and I wondered which of the many paths would bring me out on the broad tree-lined avenue that led to the old chapel St. Michael's. Through the trees I could discern its tall gray spire. Just a few yards farther on lay my place of abode.

I decided to take the longest and least winding. As I passed the last cluster of rose-bushes, I stopped to take a parting breath of their fragrance, when I heard some one call,

“Annette!”

The voice was so soft and sweet that I thought it must be a rose spirit. I heard no answer, and again the same voice called.

“Annette, come this way. It is closer.” Then through a small break in the hedge, which was within arm’s reach from where I stood, a basket of roses appeared. Before I fully recovered my senses, two young girls were standing beside me. They both said,

“Good evening, Madame,” and I answered “Good evening, Mademoiselles!” bowing to each. Then the dark-eyed one spoke in her soft, musical voice :

“Did we startle Madame?”

I laughed. “A little, but pray let me explain my presence here. My name is Marion Auldreen, spinster. I am from America and have been a guest of the Hotel du Lion d’Or for the past twenty-four hours and it was Monsieur Galdion, my host, who told me of your beautiful rose-garden. He also told me that through the kindness

of Madame de Rosseaur, his guests were welcome at any time to come here."

When I had finished speaking, the dark-eyed girl came toward me with outstretched hands.

"I welcome you in her name. My name is Natalie Evanshal and this is my cousin, Annette de Rosseaur." Then Annette reached out her hand to me:

"Let me, too, give welcome to the stranger in a strange land. In what part of America is your home?" she asked.

"I have spent nine months out of every year for the past fifteen teaching in a young ladies' seminary. The name of the place is Wildwood and it is twenty miles from New York City," I replied. "For the other three months I have no permanent address."

"Well," exclaimed Annette, "I live in London, just across the water from you."

"Oh! I thought you were a dweller in this fairyland." She laughed.

"I always spend the summer here with my grandparents and my cousin Natalie. Tell me," she continued, "is there in all your great America so pretty a spot as Pont Aven?"



"Well, if there is I never yet have been fortunate enough to see it," I replied.

While Annette and I were talking, Natalie stood silently arranging the flowers. When I finished she said :

"Mademoiselle, will you not come and meet my grandmother? I am sure you are fatigued, and hungry as well."

"You are more than kind, and it takes every bit of will power that I possess to refuse your hospitality, but when I return, if I might then have the pleasure of meeting you both again and the dear grandmother too!" Then continuing, "Now I must say good-night and good-by. In the morning I start on my homeward journey."

"Good-by and *bon voyage*," said Natalie, "remember we expect to see you when you return." She reached out her hand in a frank, childish manner and we shook hands like old friends. I turned to Annette, but before I spoke, she said :

"I am going to St. Michael's, so I will accompany you that far. To-morrow will be the first of May and these flowers are for the altars, which throughout the whole month are never without fresh blossoms."

As Annette finished speaking, Natalie gathered

her soft clinging skirts about her and disappeared through the hedge where the two girls had entered.

We started in all haste now, for dusk was settling down fast. The path was narrow, and as Annette was several steps in advance of me, we made no effort at conversation. At last she stopped and when I came up to her I saw a flight of ascending stone steps.

"Are you tired?" she asked. "Let me help you," and she took my arm. When we reached the top we were out on a broad avenue and could see the lights of the village straight ahead.

"Now, Miss Auldreen, let us walk slowly, and tell me all about America," said Annette. "Yourself too, please," she added. "You spoke of returning. Why do you not stay, now that you are here?"

I laughed. "The cause that is hurrying me away will be the cause of bringing me back. I am to chaperone a party of young girls on a four months' tour of Europe. There will be fifteen, including myself, and as we mean to spend the greater part of that time in your pretty little fishing-village, we thought it advisable to secure accommodations in advance for so large a party. By the first of June I expect to be back with my little colony

to take possession or part possession of the Hotel du Lion d'Or. And what a genial old host Monsieur Galdion is! The girls are all pupils of Wildwood and a more charming bevy would be hard to find."

"How perfectly lovely!" Annette exclaimed. "I will make each one of you tell me everything that you know about America."

"You can rest assured, dear child, that you will hear enough about it, for we Americans are very boastful of our country," I said.

"And must you really go in the morning?" she asked.

"I go to Paris to-morrow for a day or two, and judging from the commissions that I am to fill, they will be rather busy days for me," I answered.

"I wish you could go with us on our egg-hunt to-morrow! We start before daybreak and we must be at the Sea Gull's Rock before sunrise. But I forget, Miss Auldreen, that you have only been a few hours among us, so I will have to tell you the pretty legend of Pont Aven," Annette said.

"But I already know it," I said. "I heard it from a little Breton maid at the Hotel Royale in Paris. This is her birthplace, and she ended her story with, 'Ah, Madame, you should see Pont

Aven in blossom time.' So I came, and found it even more beautiful than she pictured it."

While I was speaking, we came to the parting of our ways. Through the open windows the soft strains of the organ floated out on the fragrant evening air. So what began in the sunlit rose-garden and its surroundings, the moonlight and music completed. I was under the spell. I stood silently listening, when Annette touched my arm and said:

"Choir practice is not yet over, and I hope that the curé will keep them at least for another half hour. I have so much to tell you, as you are coming back so soon. Shall we sit on the steps and talk?" she asked.

"I can never talk while listening to music," I answered.

Annette gave a soft little laugh. "Well, I can not remove the temptation, so I must remove the tempted," and ran quickly and noiselessly up the steps and placed the basket of roses on the very top one, then came quietly down again, saying, "I will walk with you to the end of the chapel yard, and from there you can see your home light, or in other words you will be at the very doorstep of the Hotel du Lion d'Or, and from that point of vantage I also can see the carriage as it turns from the avenue

toward the chapel. But to go back to the egg-hunt, Louise and I lay awake nights thinking what we shall wish for. To-night we must decide. This morning I asked Natalie if she had yet written her Heart's Desire. 'Oh, yes, ever so long ago,' she answered. Isn't that queer? Louise and I have written at least a hundred, only to destroy them."

"Is Louise your sister?" I asked.

"No, I have two brothers but no sister," she replied. "Did I not tell you that Louise sings in the choir and it is she for whom I am waiting? She is going home with me to spend the night. Although Natalie and she were both born here, neither of them have ever been at home on the first of May since they were little girls, nor have I for nine years. We were at the convent of St. Hélène, which is in a suburb of Paris, but last year finished our school-days. You will be here for my cousin's wedding, which will be on the second of June," she continued. "On your return you will find cards for yourself and party."

"I thank you in advance for the cards, and in the present for your sweet kindness," I said. "And whom is your cousin to marry? Is it some fairy prince?" I asked.

Annette smiled, shook her head and said: "The



man whom my cousin is to marry—Jean Dupré—has neither wealth nor title, but for him she has refused both. He is an orphan and a protégé of the Curé Janneau. His father was a fisherman and was drowned at sea; his mother died a few months later.”

“And what of the man—is he worthy of his good fortune?” I asked.

“If you were to ask the curé, or the poor fisher-folk in the village, or the peasants, they could tell you. Go into the homes of the poor where that unwelcome visitor, Death, has been! He is worthy of Natalie and in saying that you are answered.”

“He must indeed be noble—and did man ever before have so fair a champion? I am consumed with impatience to see this paragon, Jean Dupré, this Pont Aven fisherman.”

“But he no longer follows the calling of his early youth,” she said. “When his mother died, the good Curé Janneau became his guardian and was also his tutor until he went to Paris to complete the study of law. He is now a barrister and his motto is ‘Justice to all.’ It is from his own private income that the curé carries on this noble work of charity. . . . The carriage is coming—do you not hear old Josef singing? That is a sign that

he has been drinking too much white wine in the village. Now I must say good-by."

I heard her calling "Josef, Josef!" as she ran down the gravel path toward the approaching carriage.

\* \* \* \* \*

The diligence stopped with a jerk, and the driver called out, "Hotel du Lion d'Or." Each one gathered up her own belongings and made a dash for the door. Little, hoydenish Margaret Seldor was the first to descend the rather awkward steps, where a very courteous young man stood waiting to receive us. He reached out his hand to assist her, but she ignored the proffered hand and sprang lightly to the ground. The young man smiled and shrugged his shoulders, which meant, probably, "Very well, Miss Americans, get down as best you can!" for he did not offer assistance to the others.

I was the last. He reached out both hands, saying, "Allow me, Mademoiselle," and lifted me bodily from the step to the ground, much to the amusement of my young friends. I heard a suppressed titter, but did not even look toward them, for it was all I could do to keep from laughing outright.

"This is Mademoiselle Auldreen, I presume," he

said, addressing me and with an admiring glance at the group beside me, added "and party?"

"Yes, I am Miss Auldreen," I said; then, with a nod toward my flock, "and party. Let us know when dinner is served."

In a very few minutes a sturdy Breton maid brought the joyful tidings that dinner was waiting, and like a band of young savages, my charges rushed through the long corridor and down the stairs into the dining-room, chattering the while like magpies. The poor dears were famished, so to a voice, the dinner was pronounced "good." I only smiled, knowing well that if the same menu had been served to them at Wildwood nothing less than a mutiny would have been the result. It is a trite saying that hunger is a good sauce.

In passing the salon on our way upstairs, we caught the last words of a song. We stopped to listen: "My heart is longing for thee;" "for thee" ended in a perfect wail. The girls were convulsed with laughter. They leaned recklessly over the banister in a vain effort to catch a glimpse of the lovelorn singer.

"Had you better not go down properly?" I asked, but even their curiosity could not tempt them to

enter the salon, they were so tired. We had risen early, and to ride eight hours in a lumbering diligence is anything but restful. I fell asleep with the June moonlight streaming in my window, and with it came the odor of the lime-flower, filling the room with the fragrance of its pale green blossom.

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“Seven A.M. Have gone to post the letters. Will return at eight thirty. A.”

This note of explanation I pinned on my door and was soon on my way. I went through the chapel yard, over the gravel path where the pretty little blue-eyed Annette de Rosseaur and I had walked in the moonlight. But a bright June sun was shining now instead, commanding the stately old pines to give forth such a pungent, invigorating odor as neither flower nor fruit-blossom could impart, and the little blue gentians and the pretty pink plantains were peeping shyly through the tall waving grass, whereon the dew hung in great drops, glittering like so many rare jewels. This must be the second dynasty of flowers, since I was here a month ago. When I come back, the dew will have lifted, and I will gather an armful of these dainty wild-blossoms for a morning greeting to my dear girls.

The quantity of stamps that I asked for rather astonished the little old man at the window:

“Madame must be a woman of letters,” he ventured to remark, with a quizzical smile. I smiled back at him, thinking how very few letters this homeless spinster of forty had occasion to write. On a slip of paper I wrote my own name and that of each girl, and gave it to him, telling him to send our mail to the Hotel du Lion d’Or.

I discovered a much shorter way home, for before eight o’clock I was in the old cemetery which lay to the south of St. Michael’s chapel, but a close-growing hedge and a double row of towering pines made an impenetrable wall between. A narrow gate was the only entrance from the chapel-yard. This was far different from our cemeteries at home. Here no imposing monuments rose up proclaiming to the world where its favored ones slept, and yet there must be many here who had wealth and position in life. But each grave was marked with the emblem of the faith, the cross, and over cross and grave a rosebush spread its branches. The perfume of their falling leaves rose like incense, and the birds sang all day long, while at night the soft south wind took up the refrain, making, as it were,



a perpetual requiem over these silent sleepers. Within a few yards of the gate the road turned toward the oldest part of the cemetery, and at the very north end, and close to the hedge wall, I noticed a new mound. The flowers which entirely covered it had not yet lost their freshness, and in the same enclosure, but a few feet south, a white marble cross gleamed through the low branches of the trees. A strange feeling of sadness had come over me and a desire to know who was lying under that mound of roses. I walked quickly to the cross to see what name was written there. As I stooped down to pull aside the ivy that clung so gracefully yet so firmly and completely covering the inscription, I heard a sweeping sound like the trailing of a woman's skirts through the long grass. I looked up and saw a slender black-robed figure coming toward me with outstretched hands.

"Oh! Miss Auldreen," she said.

"Miss de Rosseaur—Annette! Is it you?" I exclaimed, in a breath. Then, touching the black garment, "Why are you wearing this?"

"Do you not know? Have you not heard?" she asked.

"I have not heard, dear. We only arrived late last evening."

“Oh, Miss Auldreen, our darling Natalie is lying there,” she said, pointing toward the flower-strewn grave.

“Oh, oh !” was all I could say. The shock seemed to deprive me of words. Annette was weeping violently now. I put my arm around her and she laid her head on my shoulder. Her slight form trembled with the intensity of her emotion. All the mother in me went out to this poor sorrowing child, yet not a word could I say. When her sobbing ceased, my tongue was loosed.

“Tell me, dear—when and how did she die?”

Annette raised her head from my shoulder, and I saw that all the pretty bright color had gone from her cheeks.

“I will try to tell you,” she said. “My cousin died on the first of June at one o’clock in the morning, and Jean Dupré must have died at the same time, perhaps at the very same moment.”

“What are you saying, child? Jean Dupré dead?”

She bowed her head. “Yes. On the second of June—that was to have been their wedding-day, you know—Natalie was buried beside her parents, and in the same grave at her side Jean Dupré was laid to rest.” Annette was again silent for a

while as though trying to proceed with her story. Then presently she continued:

“It is a custom among the fishers to give the ‘last May take,’ meaning the proceeds of that night’s fishing, to the widows and orphans of fishermen. It is a great fête day in Pont Aven. Early in the day the quays are thronged with old and young to wish *bonheur*, meaning luck. Each year the fishers choose a fleet leader. It is he who gives the signal, and with great cheering and waving, the boats move out toward the open sea. Never until the day before is their choice made known, even to the chosen one himself, but it is an honor that no one would think of refusing. Well, Jean Dupré was fleet leader this ‘last May take’ and I think on that day Natalie had a vague foreboding of some approaching evil, for she stood silently watching Jean until she could no longer distinguish him. Then turning to me, she said, ‘Annette, I wish, I wish that Jean had not gone to-day,’ and her face was as white as the petals of an ascension lily. I remember saying that they would be back by to-morrow. Just then Louise Narcien and her brother Paul joined us. We were to have dinner and spend the evening at their home. Jean was to have gone too, but now Natalie would not go. She

returned in the carriage with grandfather and grandmother, and that was the last time I saw my darling Natalie alive.

“Early in the evening Mme. Narcien sent a messenger to ask grandmother if I could spend the night with Louise, and with her permission I stayed. Some time after midnight, Mme. Narcien came to our room and told me that Natalie was ill and for Louise and me to dress quickly. M. and Mme. Narcien, went with us. My grandfather met us at the door, but I hurried past him without a word and was half-way up the stairs when Mme. Narcien called me back, ‘Do not go up just yet,’ she said. ‘Let me go to Natalie,’ I cried. She could hardly breathe the next words to me: ‘Natalie is . . . Natalie is dead.’”

After a little Annette continued: “The only one that was with her when she died was her old nurse, Maman, who has always slept in the adjoining room, thinking her care was still needed. She had been nurse to mother and daughter, and Natalie loved and honored her. This is old Maman’s story:

“‘At nine o’clock at night I heard her say good-night to Madame (that is what she calls grandmother); then I went to my child’s door to see if she

needed anything and she said, "Go to bed, dear old Mamette (that was what Natalie called her when she first learned to talk) and you are to call me at dawn to-morrow." Then she kissed me on the cheek. . . . Something awakened me from a sound sleep; it seemed that some one called me. In a moment I was up and at my child's bedside. "Did you call?" I asked, but she did not answer. I ran to her dressing-table and lit a candle. I was only a step or so from her when she screamed out, "Jean! he is at the window!" I hurried to the open window that she was facing and looked out. What I expected to see I do not know, but there on the ledge lay a dead sea-gull, and on its head I saw a bright red mark. I turned from the window with a shudder. Just then the clock on the mantle struck one, and I almost dropped the candle. When I went back to the bed her eyes were closed. "You have been dreaming, child. Wake up!" I said. She did not answer. I touched her face—a horrible fear came over me and I cried out: "Madame, Madame, come quick! Oh, holy Mother of God! is my baby dead?"

"And of Jean's death, this is old Josef's story, as he told it to me:

"'Never before did they have such luck, for at



half past twelve, the last net on the leader was hauled in, filling the hold to overflowing. She signaled the other boats of the fleet by a blue light, run up the drift mizzen, that she was ready to lift masts for home. In a few minutes more the blue lights flashed from every boat, signifying that all were ready, but in the hurry no one had noticed the approaching storm, till it was on them in all its fury. Some hurried to the shelter of the rocks and some to the open sea. A mast on the leader broke. Jean saw it coming and pushed another out of harm's way, only to be struck on the head with such violence that it knocked him over the boat's edge into the angry, foaming sea. Just as he was falling, he called "Natalie!" so loud that even above the roaring of the sea he was heard by many on the other boats and they wondered from which one the voice came. The recovery of Jean Dupré's body from the sea in such a storm will always be a miracle to the fisher-folk and peasants." "

"Oh, what a sad story," I said. I rose from the low stone on which we had been sitting. I thought that she had finished.

"But you have not heard the strangest part," Annette said. "You remember that we were going on an egg-hunt on the first of May? Well, Natalie

was the one of all the party who found a sea-gull's egg. How we teased to have her tell us her 'Heart's Desire.' Suddenly Louise cried out, 'Oh, I know!' 'Tell us,' we all said in a breath. 'The moon,' she said in a whisper. We all laughed and my cousin shook her head, saying, 'I wish for no such impossible thing.' I little thought how soon I was to know the dearest wish of that pure heart."

Annette did not speak again for some moments. She put her hands over her face and the tears stole through the slim white fingers. I again put my arm around her.

"You are overtaxing yourself, dear."

"I will tell you now. I think it will help me, for I have been as one dumb since that awful night," she said. "Jean was brought to my grandfather's house and the coffins placed side by side in the library, the room that Natalie loved best of all, she in her bridal robes, even to the veil and wreath, and Jean in his suit of black, with a white rose, Natalie's favorite flower, placed on his breast over the silent heart. On the morning of the funeral, as the day was beginning to break, I came down into the dimly-lit room and closed the door. I wanted to be alone for the last time with the one who had been as dear to me as the dearest sister

could have been. I laid my burning face on hers, so cold. 'Natalie, my darling, is there nothing more that I can do for you? Is everything as you would wish it to be?' I stood looking down on the beautiful face on which death had left no visible mark, only to close the lovely dark eyes. I heard some one coming toward the door. Then I kissed her good-by and my heart cried out, 'Natalie, Natalie, I thought the few weeks spent on your wedding-journey would seem long to me and now you are going on an eternal voyage. Why, oh why did you go?' Something that my cousin said to me on the day that Jean went to Paris four years ago came flashing through my mind. After he had gone, she said, 'Annette, let me show you the most precious gift that I ever have or ever will receive.' I was all wonder, and from a tiny box she drew forth a small gold cross attached to a slender chain. 'I will keep this while I live, and when I die it shall be buried with me.'

" 'I will find it, dear,' I said, speaking my thoughts aloud. Her jewel-case stood open as she left it. I did not see what I was in search of, so I took out piece after piece and last of all I found the cross, and with it a piece of paper. I felt quite sure what it was, the instant I saw it. For a

moment I stood with it in my hand and then I knew that I was to read what was written thereon. This is what I found:

“‘My Heart’s Desire is that Jean Dupré and I will never be separated; that our souls will be called at the same moment, and may we so live as to be ever ready.’

“The fisher-folk say that the sea called him but could not keep him.”

\* \* \* \* \*

When she had finished her story, we turned to the new broad mound. Annette knelt in silent prayer, and I reverently laid my wild blossoms on the grave, softly murmuring, *Requiescat in pace!*





# Two Mothers

BY MAUD REGAN

WHEN first they met amid the whirling snow-flakes of a December twilight, nothing seemed less likely than that two so widely separated by every accident of birth and fortune should possess a single common interest or experience.

The Carriage Lady—we are borrowing the name Lazarus gave her because her own is so well known, and we have to do with a chapter which her right hand guards sedulously from all knowledge of her left—was looking unusually lovely.

Grief had perhaps slightly dimmed the delicate rose-tints of her face, and sharpened its youthful contour, but also, in some indefinable way, it had deepened and etherealized a beauty which had heretofore been a mere happy accident of exquisite girlish tints and curves and dimples.

The most casual observer could not but be sensible of some subtle change wrought by those three months which had elapsed since last her world had seen her driving through sun-lit autumn

streets with little Billy at her side—joyous, radiant, alive to the tips of his small pink fingers.

Cavendish kept a very vivid memory of the pretty tableau to which, from the vantage-point of the club window, he had then drawn Barton's attention—a mere fleeting glimpse of prancing bays and gleaming harness and a background of somber leather upholstery throwing out two vivid joyous faces; a baby's, all eager interest and question; a girl's, all smiling response, and about them both splendid waving aureoles of golden hair.

"The laughing Madonna!" he had said. "Isn't it refreshing, in our day and time, to witness such a survival of the domestic virtues? The little chap's nurse must have a sinecure. I can't imagine what remains for her except the sewing of buttons on his frocks. His mother does absolutely everything for him, though I can't think how she contrives it with so many demands on her time."

"Eliminates bridge possibly," Barton had rejoined, as he blew a few very perfect smoke rings. "As you say, it's very delightful—and archaic. Two years ago, when Billy was quite new, I met her one afternoon on Cherbrooke Street, actually pushing his perambulator. Picture the consternation of the sisters and the cousins and the aunts,"

he went on with quiet relish. "Isn't there a railroad or so and a few incidental mines and some miles of ranch, besides the famous picture gallery, for the Kiddie to inherit?"

"Generally speaking the earth and the fulness thereof—a rather serious handicap, but she may be trusted to make a man of him," Cavendish had answered.

The conversation of three months ago recurred vividly to the friends as, descending the club steps, they faced the low Russian sleigh with its trailing robes and gleaming bays, and gravely saluted its single occupant. Muffled to the throat in a chin-chilla driving-coat the slender figure lay back among the robes, eyes downcast, long lashes brushing pale cheeks, the whole attitude eloquent of a lassitude less of the body than of the spirit.

Would people never realize the futility of these efforts to distract her from her single sad preoccupation? Weary of resisting, she had consented to this first drive through the busy noisy streets, but here, as elsewhere, there were not lacking sights and sounds to stir some poignant memory. For three long months she had dwelt in a woeful world of her own, quite alone. No one understood; not even Billy's father, who had one day spoken that

poor platitude concerning the healing influence of time.

"Why, I thought you loved the boy!" she had said with slow wonder. He had faced her a moment silently, and then turned abruptly aside with a set face from which all the color had suddenly drained.

Healing? The only healing would be to forget, and she clung passionately to each small memory—the touch of his moist rosebud lips on her half-open eyes—the flower he used to bring her limp from the fervid pressure of his hot little hand—the lilt of the sweet piping treble in its quaint little ditties. One favorite song recurred with haunting persistence:

'Krinken was a little child,  
It was summer when he smiled.'

Alas! the gay little voice was only an echo, and Billy's mother felt sure that for her it would never be summer again. How was she to go on, she kept asking herself fiercely, on through the echoing emptiness of all the years!

"Takes the little chap's death hard," said Barton sympathetically. "Looks somehow as if she had come to the end of things."

"She's worn out with the strain, poor girl," said

Cavendish. "Never left the little chap's room, though they had *all* the time of that children's specialist, and two of the best nurses in town. The usual story—all the life-saving forces at work and everything in the world to live for and yet the fight is lost. Down in the slums seemingly superfluous children are tumbling out of scarlet fever every day. Read me the riddle."

"Happily the solution is in other hands," said Cavendish, with unwonted gravity. "They should take the poor girl off somewhere—Egypt—the south of France."

"Unhappily, her husband can not induce her to make so great an effort. She even shrinks from seeing any of her friends. None of them understand, she says—they are all 'happy people'—she, of all imaginable beings, to feel so out of tune with joy! I infer that, unnatural as it may sound, even poor George, who was so tremendously set on the little lad, feels himself something of an outsider."

"It's rather selfish in its last analysis, that sort of grief," said Cavendish thoughtfully; "but after all, it's a world-old cry, 'Is there any sorrow like to my sorrow?'"

“Only with the young, I fancy,” said Barton. “The years teach us our own case is not in the least isolated or peculiar.”

Meanwhile the low Russian sleigh had swung into a long steep street, barred at its summit by the irregular mass of the hospital buildings, black against the fading sunset sky. Looking listlessly out from her furs the Carriage Lady’s attention was held by the figure of a woman, shabby and tired, toiling painfully up the sharp ascent. The keen wind whipped strands of dark hair into eyes that were darker still, with a soft Oriental duski-ness; plucked at her thin skirts, and tugged at her dingy shawl—here at last meeting with stubborn resistance. As she rested a moment, panting and breathless, she tucked in its frayed ends as though to enfold something infinitely precious—something which, with a swift pang, the Carriage Lady saw was a little child—the quaint, shrewd, elfin oddity she came to know as Lazarus.

A quick order brought the sleigh to a stand, and its occupant, with that sudden irradiating smile so long a stranger to her pale strained face, was saying:

“May I not drive you wherever you are going? This wind is very exhausting and” (with a quick



glance at the little form wrapped in the dingy shawl) "I fear the child is ill."

There was a momentary hesitation, while with unconscious pathos the dark eyes swept from the shabbiness of her own aspect to the exquisite perfection of the Carriage Lady, leaning toward her with eager friendliness. A light of sudden rapture lit the somber duskiness of the child's eyes. "Say yes," he urged, the pale elfin face grown young and eager, as though grim realities of pain and poverty had been momentarily banished; and his mother voicing her gratitude in low tones, full of soft foreign inflections, sank timidly amid the engulfing luxury of deep rich furs.

"The child was indeed ill—almost unto death," she explained, sinking her voice to a whisper, which none the less penetrated to the keen little ears.

"I can't possibly get better," piped the elfin treble with startling distinctness. "I heard the doctor tell Father Browne. That's why they baptized me so soon. Once upon a time we were Jews."

"Poor wee mite!" said the Carriage Lady huskily. It seemed so very terrible to hear a child little older than Billy discuss his own death in this

calm impersonal fashion, and the impression deepened with each fragmentary detail which made up the dark mosaic of his brief life-tale.

"With what *I* have, you live a long, long time, p'raps till spring. You see they couldn't keep me that long at the hospital," he explained, quite without bitterness, "'cause they needed my cot for another little boy—*he's* going to get well." The Carriage Lady laid a sympathetic hand upon the woman's dingy shawl.

"It is terrible for you," she said in a fierce little whisper, "terrible! I *know*, for once I had a little boy." It was perhaps the first time she had spared a thought for another's woe since the day on which she had lost him.

'Throughout the child's tale and the mother's elucidations, what most forcibly impressed her was the pathos of their dumb acquiescence in a lot which would have stirred her to hot rebellion. She learned that their destination that evening was the hospital department for the care of non-resident cases. Every evening (for she worked all day on wonderful laces whose stitches and designs were a family inheritance) she carried the child there for his treatment. Then he rested more easily through the night. Once he had been able to walk

there—the Carriage Lady shot a swift, compassionate glance at the small frail form—but now she carried him the entire distance of more than a mile. “He is very light,” she concluded, with a patient sigh.

He was indeed tiny and frail for a child of seven. Owing to that strange, baffling spinal malady, nothing of him had ever moved very quickly, save his nimble wits and the great dark eyes that seemed always to be questioning, seeking, as though with an instinct that the time of their worldly outlook was to be brief, and as much as possible must be made of the hurrying moments.

“But isn’t it very hard for you in all weathers? Of course I can understand how you want to have him with you, but surely the child would be more comfortable at the hospital. It is impossible that there is not room for him somewhere.”

But such, it seemed, was the actual case. Against Lazarus, as long since against the “Elder Brother,” the inns of this world were stubbornly closed. Tossed hither and yon at the ukase of this board and that committee, the child seemed a very shuttlecock of fate. From the children’s shelter he had been sent to the hospital, where, as a knotty medical enigma, he had enjoyed a brief season of

comfort and importance. Ultimately science had decided that for the problem of Lazarus' spine this world at least held no solution, and he was discharged in favor of another small sufferer whose chances for recovery were brighter. An effort had been made to secure him admission to the home for incurables, but it was already overcrowded. Overcrowded! It seemed to be the cry all along the Via Dolorosa, where, an hour ago, the Carriage Lady had fancied herself an almost solitary pilgrim.

"Wait for me, please—I am coming back for you," she said to the child's mother, as she stepped from the sleigh at the entrance of the outdoor department. "I shall drive to the Administration Building and see if some better arrangement can not be made."

The name of the hospital had just recurred to her as being one of the many institutions of which her husband was a director or governor, and her card procured her almost instant admission to the private office of the medical superintendent. She had met him once or twice before amid other surroundings, and had bestowed a momentary study on his dark, typical, almost handsome face, across the low-banked flowers of a friend's dinner table.

It lighted pleasantly as he rose to greet her, but her first question concerning Lazarus found him slightly puzzled. "So many drifted through the crowded wards," he said in explanation. A swift glance at a book lying upon his desk furnished almost immediately the desired clue.

"A quaint little fellow with great dark eyes? He was rather a pet in the ward. Father Browne was greatly interested in him, I remember. Unfortunately his case is considered hopeless."

"So you turned him adrift," said the Carriage Lady hotly. "It seems almost incredible that there should be room nowhere for one so frail and helpless."

"Dear lady, we had no choice. He had been with us five months. Working as we must for the greatest good of the greatest number, we can not always give rein to our sympathies. Try to believe we are not utterly callous," he said, with a smile which seemed of itself sufficient denial, so completely did it transfigure the dark gravity of his face.

"I will try," she said, adding with quick penitence. "Forgive me! That is ungenerous, unjust to *you*, who give your whole life to this work, from *me*, the convert of an hour ago. Only this special



case appealed to me because—because of my little son,” she said, her dark eyes brimming, her voice unsteady.

“I understand,” he said with grave sympathy.

“Could you not keep him here as a private patient?” she went on, quickly recovering herself. “I should, of course, be responsible?”

That, it seemed, was a matter of more easy arrangement—that, and the engagement of Lazarus’ particularly beloved nurse for his own special and exclusive service. In fact, it was surprising to find with how many alleviations money—mere money—as the Carriage Lady phrased it, could surround the tragedy of the child’s lot. It could emancipate his mother from the daily tyranny of the needle, leaving her free to pass with him the precious hours of his numbered days. It could send a carriage morning and night to save her weary feet that long steep way they knew so well. It was in fact a “buried talent,” whose worthiest uses the Carriage Lady seemed to have learned for the first time. As she drove homeward through the darkening streets, she found herself realizing that her grief had been a narrow, selfish thing, corroding where it should have ennobled. She remembered with sharp compunction the lonely fig-



ure awaiting her return in the splendid, silent house which had so lately rung to the gay prattle of the "little chap," about whom had centered all his hopes and plans and soaring ambitions. The splendid structure had crumbled, and all these months she had left him lonely amid the ruins, treating him as an uncomprehending alien.

As she entered the rich hall fragrant with the scent of unseen roses, she caught a glimpse through parted library portières at its farther end of her husband's powerful drooping figure sunk in a cavernous armchair before the glowing grate. A student lamp on a table near at hand shone upon a litter of papers and periodicals, in which the Carriage Lady realized he would, in her presence, have simulated an interest. But brooding alone the mask was discarded, and he sat quite still; lean, nervous hands clasped about his knee; somber eyes looking straight before him—seeing, she was sure, the little sturdy figure, who had once kept twilight camp upon the hearthrug, amid a battered tin regiment that was nevermore to hear Billy's reveille. The deep Persian rug muffled her light steps as she swiftly traversed the shadowy room and stood a moment unobserved behind her husband's chair. Then she leaned over, brushing

with her lips the crisp dark hair, where new silver threads were shining.

“Dear ! I have come back,” she whispered softly. And as he caught her small hands almost fiercely, she seemed to realize what need there had been of her return.

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The years have such a way of slipping by unheeded, that quite a number must have passed since the two mothers met in the long steep street barred at its summit by the hospital, where little Lazarus found his ultimate worldly refuge. Before he fared forth to the “house of many mansions” there was for him a very glorious Christmas—his only one, since heretofore he had known but the Jewish “Feast of Lights,” of whose observance he told the other children as he sat in the holly-trimmed ward, enthroned in a cushioned invalid chair which was one of the Carriage Lady’s innumerable gifts to her small protégé. Beside him was a great basket of presents which she had sent for his personal distribution among his friends, and Lazarus was conscious of no special magnanimity when he bestowed the finest—a “really” watch that “wound and went,” upon the small usurper of his own cot, who was vindicating the doctors’ judgment by

“growing better.” Lazarus must also have fulfilled their prophecies by lingering till early spring, though the last definite record of him is the St. Valentine’s greeting he sent to the Carriage Lady. She treasures it still, in a box with some small memories of Billy, though it is but a crude childish affair of colored crayons, bearing the time-honored emblem of an arrow-pierced heart. It looks as though the little artist had first traced its outline, since faint pencil marks are visible beyond the vermilion—and even with such precautions the letters of the doggerel couplet are slightly askew, for Lazarus printed it lying upon his back, with a long rest between each of the letters which bore to the Carriage Lady his final greeting:

When this you see, remember me,  
Though distant far I then may be.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

The mother of Lazarus never went back to her needle and cobwebby laces, for the Carriage Lady knew how infinitely better it is that heart and brain as well as hands should be busy when life is suddenly emptied of all that has given it point and purpose. So the gentle, patient, somber-eyed woman is matron of the children’s hospital which that spring was built and endowed as a memorial

for Billy, and it is safe to say no waif is ever turned from doors that are guarded by the mother of Lazarus. For all that their worldly ways lie wide apart, there is scarcely a day that the two mothers do not meet in the sunny, flower-filled wards.

Two sturdy, handsome children—the boy with all Billy's eager vivacity carefully subdued as he tiptoes his way among the snowy cots of his little brother's guests—fill very happily and completely the Carriage Lady's days.

And for that other mother there is always the vision of a little radiant figure, grown straight and strong, which awaits her with outstretched arms at the journey's close.

# Noblesse Oblige

BY ANNA BLANCHE M'GILL

BUELL was supposed to be marching on Louisville, partly to replenish his supplies. Meantime Bragg, who had just succeeded Beauregard in command in the South, was flinging his army northward toward Kentucky. To expedite the work to be done there, Morgan and Forest were lashing hither and thither through the State and Tennessee to the South, cutting railroads, telegraph wires, making cavalry-raids, to the confusion of Nelson, who let Buell know it was no fun "chasing cavalry with infantry."

Nazareth, the old convent school—for all its seeming so sheltered in its academic shades—seemed destined to be lashed by the sea of trouble raging between the North and South. From the convent windows, from time to time, could be seen companies of infantry or cavalry, coats blue or gray, passing along the road leading from the south to Louisville. Once before a foraging party had actually encroached upon the broad academy-grounds, but passed on. And now again

some Confederate skirmishers or what-not had appeared!

Down on the road to the city one late afternoon they had loomed in sight. To Mother Columba's consternation they had not passed straight on to Bardstown, whither they seemed headed, but turned into the elm-avenue from the station to the Academy—and lo and behold! three had come straight up the walk, and in a moment Mother was summoned to the parlor for an interview!

“We hate to disturb you, but we’re in a plight,” the captain explained; “our stores are low, down to nothing. We’re ordered to this neighborhood in case Buell comes this way. We don’t want to pass into Bardstown. Let us camp just a night or so at the most in your fields, hidden back there behind your buildings till my men get a little rest—they’re fagged to extinction. And could you possibly give us a little meal or something to help out till we get to Bardstown or Louisville, if Bragg orders us to make a detour in that direction? I promise my men shan’t come near the Academy—you and your young ladies shall remain unmolested.”

What could Mother Columba do? He stood there, the young leader of the company, his dark tired eyes continuing to plead his cause, as indeed



did the rest of his young face, so pale and marked with lines of care and worry for all his stern jaw and upright shoulders. Besides, wasn't he one of Mother Columba's "own people"? A son of the South, as she was a daughter? It wouldn't do, of course, for Nazareth to display partisanship; for though the majority of the girls were from the South, there were several from above the Mason and Dixon line. For their sakes Nazareth must remain as the rest of Kentucky so far—neutral.

Yet for all this Mother Columba's heart ached to throw her fields and her own well-stocked commissary-department open to these young Confederates. Not only was she herself a Southerner, her brothers and nephews serving under Davis, but there was, as a matter of fact, no denying Nazareth's real sympathies otherwise. Though, according to strict geographical description, the old school was in the Middle West, for over a half a century it had been considered one of the great, one of the few educational institutions of the South. Thither year after year the wealthy cotton-planters and other gentlemen of the old French and Spanish régime of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and adjacent States had brought their daughters to these

Sisters of Charity in Kentucky; so Nazareth had become a kind of foster-mother to the South. It is a custom still to comment on how wide its ramifications are—what with all the Southern mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers who have worn the old school's blues and maroons! Moreover, what with intermarriages of Nazareth girls with sons of women once Nazareth girls themselves, the influence of the Academy, very marked along certain lines, may still be met with, widely spread as it yet is in the South of to-day.

So small wonder Mother Columba hesitated! Why, many of those young fellows waiting down in the avenue were sons of mothers who had been educated at Nazareth. The young second-lieutenant, Jean le Blanc, was the son of her old school-mate, Adele Brousseau. His mother and the mother of Lucile Duval, now a "sub-graduate," had been bosom friends within these very halls. So weren't he and dear knows how many of his companions "Nazareth boys," as it were, to whom she owed a duty almost as sacred as that of protecting her "Nazareth girls"?

Down on the grass out there in the avenue the other men had thrown themselves in evident exhaustion. She couldn't send them away! So

turning to the captain, with her wonderful dignity and grace, she said:

“Just so you keep your men down in the orchard and pasture you may remain. The path to the right will lead you there. I will have some food sent to you.”

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Dear little Sister Genevieve, and her assistants who were “disciplinarians” for the evening recreation-hour, wished that, if the soldiers had to come, they had come in the morning. The girls were in high commotion. It took an extra corps of disciplinarians to keep them in order till bedtime. Indeed the bell for retiring had been moved forward three-quarters of an hour, for such excitement prevailed that it would of course be difficult to get any quiet in the dormitories at the usual hours.

As long as the late autumn light still lingered in the sky, it was almost impossible to keep the groups of overwrought girls away from the windows. True, they could not see down into orchard or pasture from the recreation-hall windows, but curiosity and the hope of one chance glimpse kept eager eyes constantly on watch.

Now that it was dusk the little cliques and

couples walked about the old hall or sat in closely whispered talk in which excitement rolled high.

"I'm sure I saw Eugene Pickney out there in the avenue," one girl remarked.

"Well, if it's the Sixth Mississippi, Paul's in it, and I'm sure mother would let me see my own cousin," another observed.

"What degree of cousin?" Marie de Kay asked mischievously.

"But I tell you it's not the Sixth Mississippi," said Lucile Duval positively. "I know as well as I know anything it was Jean le Blanc I saw coming up the avenue with the captain while I was practicing down in Mother's room. My! how she did hurry me up to the study-hall! I was a big goose not to hang around down there. But I'm sure it's Jean, and if it is he'll see me some way! I simply shall see *him*!"

"How can you, goosey? Didn't you say your mother had told Mother Columba how things were between you and Jean, and that it was one reason they made you come here to school? I see Mother letting you see him!"

"Well, I'm going to, if I've got to run away to do it!" answered Lucile. In her sixteen-year-old voice was all the romantic determination whose

manifestations at home had decided her being sent to the quiet convent school, away from all such "distractions" as young Le Blanc had begun to prove, charming boy as he was otherwise.

While Lucile had violently declared her resolution to see him, the little group of other girls looked on and listened with mingled fear and trembling and admiration. Meantime Sister Genevieve had come around the corner of the wall and joined the group unexpectedly. When everybody else failed to bring Lucile to terms, Sister Genevieve was usually delegated to the task. There seemed some strange understanding between the pale gentle nun and the dark-haired, handsome, spirited girl whose parents heard in amazement of the little Sister whose will could bend Lucile's. "How do you control her?" the other nuns would ask in despair at some vivacious trick, some maddening rupture of the rules Lucile was responsible for. "O she's not really so incorrigible, if you only know how to deal with her," the disciplinarian would say. Sister Henrietta, who taught higher Latin, used to comment: "Sister Genevieve, your tactics with Lucile remind me of Agricola's with the Roman insubordinates—he treated them as though he had found them good.' "



Little Sister Genevieve would smile and go her ways, thinking how wise Agricola had been. For somehow she couldn't blame Lucile as the others did. With her Spanish and French heritages; spoiled as she was by doting uncles, aunts, grandmothers, parents; brought up till she was a good-sized girl in a social circle full of color, romance, and distractions of various kinds, then suddenly whisked from this to the routine and quiet of the convent just when little romances were beginning to enter her own young life, dear young Jean le Blancs, and the like; with all this, Sister Genevieve used to say, the wonder was Lucile wasn't more intractable than the other Sisters really found her.

"What were you saying, Lucile?" her champion had asked on joining the group.

"I was saying if Jean le Blanc is on Nazareth soil, I'm going to see him!"

The little group looked on amazed. For once Lucile had defied Sister Genevieve. The thing had never happened before, nor this other, the greater anomaly, the explicit mention of a boy's name before a nun! And meantime Lucile continued to stand there, handsome girl that she was, her face flushed, defiance evident in her glance and pose. Sister Genevieve's mild steady glance met the chal-



lenge in Lucile's a moment—and then without more ado she spoke:

“Young ladies, it's bedtime! Lucile, will you help me ring the bells?”

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning lessons were a farce. Though the study-hall, too, was out of line of vision of orchard or pasture, scarcely a head, even the most studious, bowed continuously over algebras, rhetorics, grammars, as the case might be. Wouldn't there, perhaps, be a faint chance of a faint glimpse?

Finally, much to the relief of those in authority, the day was over. Supper, too, being finished, the girls were allowed their usual walk. Yet not exactly their usual walk. For this evening they were not permitted to promenade quite so far as the lilac-bush at the end of the Commencement Hall. Somehow the lilac bush had never seemed so beguiling. No matter; the limits were set this side of it. For just past it, around the corner of the Hall, could be had a clear view of the soldiers down in orchard and pasture. So within the prescribed limits walked the girls under close supervision. That is, all the girls except one.

In some way Lucile had slipped away from the others. How she had done it no one knew. Half-

past six bell had been rung, however, and the majority of the Sisters, except those presiding, were supposed to be in church for “prayers.”

Just where the long corridor from the refectory leads into the recreation-hall, a small passage way leads out into an open space, the old well-yard. A space it was, not much frequented, the girls hardly ever going into it; the Sisters only at meal-times to draw up some water in “the old oaken bucket.” Here to the door opening on this yard Lucile had contrived to slip. And there she waited till a young soldier appeared—by some miracle, apparently—just at the hour of all hours when girls and presiding Sisters were usually in the front yards, and the other Sisters at prayers or busy in some other part of the convent not looking out on this enclosure. Whether by prearrangement or not between them, as Lucile stood in the doorway up from the camp came the young second lieutenant!

He must come quickly, Lucile kept saying to herself, for at any minute mightn’t a Sister appear?

And he came quickly—wasn’t he accustomed already to stealing marches and making other rapid advances? He came very quickly; in fact in a moment he would be within earshot of a whisper—but it was just the moment when by some chance,

some inexplicable fatality, the refectory door was opened and Mother Columba stood behind Lucile!

The young fellow stopped short as if fastened to the spot! A whole army wouldn't have been so difficult to face as that calm, dignified figure in the black habit, overshadowing Lucile! . . . For a moment all three stood silent. This was, it flashed through Jean's mind, this was indeed being in the crushing presence of a "superior" officer! Mother Columba looked at him sternly a moment longer, her own heart, however, in agitation, all her sweet generous nature longing to permit these two young people to speak to each other, the son and daughter respectively of her two closest school-girl friends. Wasn't it natural these two young people from the far South *should* want to see each other? They had been playmates, as a matter of fact; and it seemed so simple a thing, by no means so dreadful a thing for them to want a glimpse of each other. But discipline was discipline! And so there was nothing to do but to draw herself up with the exquisite dignity of which she was past mistress.

"Lieutenant le Blanc, when I gave your captain permission to camp a while in our fields it was

with your promise that certain bounds should be respected. I thought we were showing courtesy and hospitality to gentlemen at least! Miss Duval, if you have nothing to say to Lieutenant le Blanc you may report to Sister Genevieve."

Lucile, who had stood sullen, the lights of pride and insubordination glowing in her eyes, while a childish pout screwed down the corners of her mouth, now turned and went into the recreation-hall. While as for the young lieutenant, how well Mother's stroke had been calculated! Wasn't "noblesse oblige" bred in the very bone of every Le Blanc? Just a moment "with his mother's fine true eyes," Mother Columba had afterwards said, Jean looked at her. Discipline wasn't a new story to him—just a moment he looked at her, then touched his cap, turned, and walked rapidly down to the impromptu camp.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I'll wager a cookie 'gainst a 'gunger' Sister Genevieve gave Lucile only a dictionary-column" (the stock form of Nazareth penance), said Louise Brinton at morning-recreation.

"Well, Sister Genevieve ought to have to learn one herself for not having kept an eye on Lucile constantly. She might have known Lucile would

be up to some mischief under the circumstances," commented another of the council.

"Do you suppose Lucile had intended to run away?" asked a timid little "third-class," much excited by the episode.

"Who can ever guess what Lucile Duval is going to do?" And the silence of speculation fell more deeply upon the little group through the moment or so before the bell for study-hour called them to cogitations less romantic.





# The Lesson

BY JEROME HARTE

PEGGY did impossibly pretty women in water colors and the art stores bought them up eagerly. She gave a few lessons in drawing on Saturday mornings, and received and filled with credit occasional engagements to lecture before society "art" circles. The net result was her living.

Jane wrote stories and poems for the magazines and newspapers, taught idle girls to play bridge, and was advertised as a "perfectly charming" person to lecture on literature and literary subjects before women's clubs. Be it said, with all due deference to Jane's ability, she was always on the verge of poverty and only escaped through Peggy's hard-headed advice and help.

The girls lived with Annabel Josephine, younger than either of them and not nearly so clever and talented; but Annabel Josephine was the only comfortable, prosperous, habitually untroubled girl in their studio-flat. She sang light, frivolous little songs in a light, frivolous little voice in a light, frivolous little way, looking charm-

ingly piquant and frail as she sang, and she was never out of an "engagement." When one vaudeville house could dispense with her act, another perfectly respectable theater in the next street would take her on; or a musical comedy, destined to run long, gave her a light part for an indefinite period. For it all, she got never less than forty-five dollars a week—a month's fortune, sometimes, to Jane and Peggy!—she had many pretty gowns and luxuries of dress and toilet, and sent every month a neat little check to an adoring mother and invalid sister in a Western country town. In a word, Annabel was the millionaire and Lady Bountiful of the establishment.

"If it were not for Annabel," said Peggy, "I'd never have a bit of cold cream for my poor hands, nor a whiff of eau de cologne for my tired head! I don't see how she manages! My sister has a new little girl and I'd like nothing better than to send her a lace and ribbon bassinette. But how could I? The rent is due next week, and if I do not have a new silk waist, I can not talk before the Society of Art Lovers on Tuesday. If I were Annabel, I could buy the bassinette, two waists, and have money left over after I had paid my share of the rent!"

"Yes, indeed," sighed Jane. "I daresay we are very fortunate, but I do wish I could pay my bills! *You* can buy the new waist, if you do not send any presents to the new baby, but bless you! I can send no present and buy no waist! If Annabel won't lend me a whole frock, I can't keep a single lecture engagement for heaven knows how long! Annabel gets a check on Saturday; the stores pay you cash; but if a magazine accepts a story this winter, it will send me a check summer after next! *I* have chosen a precarious means of livelihood!"

She drew her hand across her eyes and stirred vigorously at some concoction which she was preparing in the chafing-dish. Annabel looked up from the divan where she was huddled with a box of candy and a good new book.

"Pooh, pooh!" she laughed. "The Lord was very good to you when He gave you talent to write! Thank Him and keep busy! Of course, I'll loan you a frock—any one you please. The pink chiffon thing that I wore when I sang 'The Gibson Girl.' You were crazy about that. You may have it for keeps!"

Peggy and Jane squealed. "There it is!" cried Jane. "*You* can give things away, but *we* can

scarcely feed ourselves! I wish *we* got forty-five dollars per week!"

"Fifty now," corrected Annabel Josephine. "You forget that I do a modest little dance now—the one that Sister Catherine approved of, even for the stage!"

"So you do!" said Peggy. "When I get my new waist and Jane has the pink, we'll go to the *matinée* to see you do the dance. We know all your songs better than you do!"

"After the *matinée* I'll buy you dinner, if you won't choose too expensive a place!"

Again the girls squealed with delight. "There you are!" cried Jane. "*She* can treat us, but we can never do anything for her!"

"Never mind," said Annabel. "I can use you at the *matinée*. Applause is needed, so I will require you to split your gloves after each one of my songs!"

Peggy sighed. "We'll do anything for you, dear, but gloves are so expensive nowadays!" she said.

The three girls had been pupils together in a beautiful little convent school in the West, and their friendship had lasted until these days of bread-winning. Peggy was an orphan with neither sister nor brother. An old uncle had sent her

through school, but felt, then, that she ought to look after herself. The comradeship of Jane and Annabel Josephine meant family ties to poor Peggy. Jane had a father and a stepmother. There was no place for her at home, and her married sisters and brothers were none too well off in the world's goods. What more natural, then, than that Jane should take care of herself?

Annabel Josephine had her mother and invalid sister and frail health. In the convent school, where she was a day pupil, Sister Catherine herself discovered in Annabel a certain refined talent for acting. It was not a great gift, nor was Annabel ever likely to become a widely-known singer. But she had points in her favor that the keen-sighted nun found out; and somehow, the Sisters, good Father Oswald, spiritual adviser of the school-girls, and Annabel's mother and sister made up their minds that the stage was not an unsafe place to put their precious one.

It was not as though Annabel were like many young women. She was as pure and sweet as a flower, but she was wide awake, in spite of her childish air, and she had a fund of common sense and clear-headedness that it would be difficult to



beat. New York was not so dreadful a place for three girls like our heroines. Everybody was glad that they were going together; but if sweet Sister Catherine was more pleased about one thing than another, it was not because Peggy and Jane were going with the little singer, but rather because the little singer was going to "look after" Peggy and Jane!

The convent school atmosphere had followed the three girls to the crowded metropolis and pervaded the two tiny rooms called their "flat." A predominance of sacred pictures and the Catholic books upon table and book-shelf proclaimed the deep rooting of their religion; here, there and everywhere, too, were camera pictures of the beloved convent itself and of Sister Catherine, their best-loved guide in the old days. Other sketches there were of the nun, black and white ones done by Peggy's adoring fingers and a beautiful large one in wash colors. Thanks to Peggy's art, the nun looked very real to them on the walls of their rooms!

Something of each girl was in the tone of the flat. Peggy's impossibly pretty creatures in water colors were crowded about on wall and tables and her easel and paint-boxes filled a corner under the



high south windows, where the light was best: no one could mistake that an artist lived here!

The north window, in the gray light, was Jane's. Here she had a desk and writing-table, always in a state of wild disarray, with returned manuscripts and tiny slips saying, "We are sorry that this is not available," scattered all about. Her bookcase of volumes on "How to Write" and "What to Say to the Editor" was perpetually topsy turvy; there was ink on her bust of Shakespeare and the literary pictures on the walls above desk and cot were invariably at a rakish angle. And Jane did not do it to be "different." She could not help things!

Annabel Josephine had the inner room. Her piano stood near the only window and she always had it strewn with Beethoven and Chopin and exquisite old ballads. The popular songs which she sang to gain a livelihood she kept shut away in her quaint music cabinet beside the piano. She had busts and pictures of Liszt and the rest of them set up and hung up among her Madonnas, her camera pictures of the convent, and her sketches of dear Sister Catherine. But there was nothing to suggest the actress or the public singer; not a picture, not a dramatic magazine. Annabel took musical

periodicals, instead, and there was always a pile of high-class ones on her table. Indeed, Annabel looked the part of a classical music devotee, and no one ever took her for a vaudeville artist. When she went out each afternoon and evening, and sometimes to rehearsal in the morning, the neighbors looked after a demure, neat little blonde girl with a music-roll under her arm and said: "The youngest of those girls in the flat on the third floor must give music lessons. How young she is to be earning her living!"

To New York the three girls had brought their religion with them, and at the end of two years it was as strong and sweet in them as in the old days of the convent and Sister Catherine. They were devout Catholics, too, and true to their promises to Father Oswald, they regulated the hopes and plans of their daily lives by the simple rule of prayer and entire belief in an all-kind Father in heaven.

Nor had they ever reason to doubt the wisdom of their faith. The girls prospered as three girls do not often prosper in the madly whirling New York working world, and their robust young health was spared to them. True, Annabel had to be very careful of her throat when cold weather

came, and she lost a night or two during the winter, but that was not serious. Peggy caught the measles from one of her pupils, and had to go to the hospital, but she got well beautifully, thanks to the prayers of her friends—as she would have told you; and while she was ill, an art magazine bought a set of drawings that had been returned a score of times and had been given up by Peggy as absolutely unsalable, so it was almost like finding money. It made of the sickness a small matter, indeed!

And as the months went by, Jane's luck turned. She was no longer a penniless author. She had so many lecture engagements that she raised her prices; her stories came back no more and she was kept busy filling orders for love tales; some keen editor syndicated one of her series of newspaper satires, and she got out of debt in a month! Then she wrote a novel, and people bought it. The royalty on this enabled her to move with Peggy and Annabel into a flat of three rooms and more daylight.

"I am now the Lady Bountiful of this crowd!" cried Jane.

And through it all, the girls never forgot who it was granted them life and prosperity. They

were ardent little Catholic Christians; and as Peggy said, if they did not have favors to pray to God for now, they had so much to thank Him for that they were as busy praying as ever they had been. They went together to their duty each month, a pretty trio, and they had always given their mite to Christ's poor. When Sister Catherine or Father Oswald wanted to point to an example, they told of Peggy, Jane, and Annabel Josephine.

At the end of the fourth year Jane had written a second book that was one of the six best sellers. Money rolled in, and she gave everybody presents, including Annabel's mother and sister. Then she was off on a trip to Europe, with orders to write of her experiences for a number of leading periodicals. Annabel could not afford the time to go with her: the invalid sister needed more money, and Annabel had risen to an understudy part in light opera, a place not to be lightly cast aside for a trip abroad. Peggy would not leave Annabel, so they said that they would keep the flat until Jane came back.

So Jane went with a literary woman to chaperone her, and was gone a year. She had a "divine" time, she said. She returned with an accent, a stock of

airs and graces, and much new clothes. Peggy and Annabel were wild with delight to get her back again.

But the Old World seemed to have turned Jane's head. She was not the Jane that went away.

"Dear, dear, how old-fashioned you are!" cried she to her comrades on the night of her arrival. Peggy and Annabel had knelt down before the gas-fire to say their prayers before getting into bed. "I suppose that is the way that one first loses one's faith, *n'est-ce pas?* I have not said my prayers in six months!"

"What!" exclaimed Peggy and Annabel, turning horrified eyes upon the traveler.

"Fact!" said Jane, coolly. "It was such a waste of time at first, when I was dead tired from all the delightful sightseeing, and then later I just got out of the habit, don't you know!"

"Well, my word!" gasped Peggy, "you are pretty unconcerned about it!"

"You better come and kneel down with us," said Annabel in her motherly way that sat so quaint upon her childishness. "You can't get along without help!"

"Nonsense!" laughed Jane, in a superior tone.



"You are two dear little geese! I am going straight to bed!"

Sunday the girls had another shock. "I say," drawled Jane from her cot on Sunday morning, "hand me a cup of coffee and a roll, will you, Peg, that's a dear? I am just dying for the luxury of a breakfast in bed!"

"Well!" said Peggy, putting pins in her dress with one hand and pouring water on the coffee with the other, "you can't have your breakfast in bed to-day! You'll be late for Mass if you do!"

"Mass!" repeated Jane, with a yawn. She lifted a bit of the shade on the window near her bed. "Why, good land, look at the rain!" she cried. "Who would go out to church on such a day!"

Peggy dropped the cover of the coffee-pot and faced Jane. "When did a Catholic stay home from church because it was *raining*?" she demanded, with scorn.

But Jane only laughed. "My dear," she said, "we don't all need religion! I don't need religion now! I'm strong without it! I've noticed, don't you know, that the men and women who stand highest in the world do not clutter themselves with foolish superstitions!"



Peggy was too raging to speak, and Annabel's horror got the better of her gentleness. "I don't believe we will give you your breakfast in bed," said the latter, coldly. "We can not be late for Mass."

"Did you ever in your life hear anything so ridiculous?" sputtered Peggy, on the way to church. "The nerve of Jane! Why, going abroad has made a wicked fool of her! She'll go to the bad!"

"No she won't, dear," said Annabel. "She's too old now. But it is very dreadful. We can only pray for her, and we must write Sister Catherine all about it. Perhaps she could write Jane a helpful letter!"

"Jane's crazy," said Peggy, with wet eyes. "Poor Sister Catherine, it will make her unhappy and Father Oswald's heart will ache!"

"I'm glad it isn't I," mused Annabel, soberly. "I wouldn't have the ghost of a chance on the stage if I did not know our dear Mother in heaven and Christ Himself were watching over me. And then, if you had to write *that* about me, instead of about Jane, they'd all think that they had been wrong in letting me earn my living before the footlights. It would be awful, wouldn't it, Peggy? Sister

Catherine would feel that most, I am pretty positive!"

The best days of friendship with Jane seemed well-nigh over, for the successful young authoress had become, not only a lukewarm Catholic, but an unbearable skeptic. Peggy was always on the verge of a quarrel with her, and Annabel would often get up and leave the room in which Jane was holding forth.

"We'll have to separate in time!" said Peggy, with decision.

As if to uphold Jane's own theory that they who did not lean on the heavenly Father had greater worldly prosperity than those who did, good luck poured in upon her. She could not fill all her magazine orders. She commanded high prices from the editors, and had always a big bank balance, even after she had furnished herself with every luxury her tastes craved. The publishers wanted a new novel, but she was too busy with the short stories to write it; and, above all, her name was fairly well known.

To cap the climax, Prince Charming came. It was the first love affair in the trio, and Peggy and Annabel were excited and interested. Jane's ring was a dream, they averred, and they had the wed-

ding all planned long before Jane had thought about it.

The man was a rich old bachelor whom Jane had met on shipboard. He was a fine fellow, in his way, and genuinely fond of Jane, whom he said was the brightest girl he had ever met. He loaded her with presents, and did nice things for Peggy and Annabel. Once he said that they would all live together when he and Jane were married.

When a blow has fallen, or a calamity has occurred, everybody asks everybody else how it happened and where it began. And nobody can tell!

It was so with Jane's love affair and its *dénouement*. Peggy and Annabel could never rightly explain developments and causes. Jane quarreled with her lover, now and then, but it was not serious. They had no deep disagreements. There was religion: the man had no convictions, and Jane herself said that she did not care how they were married! That point was easily disposed of. Then neither one of them had family ties to consider and there were no friends to oppose the match. In a word, it would be hard to tell how the engagement came to be broken.

For broken it was. Peggy had been busy painting in the inner room and had not paid the slight-

est attention to the end of a stormy scene between the lovers as they came in from an afternoon concert. But Peggy did hear him say: "Young lady, I will take my ring, and this affair is at an end!"

When he had gone, Jane fainted. She was sick for a whole week, and the girls knew not how to comfort her. "I do not know just what happened!" Jane would moan. "I can't believe he meant it!"

Annabel Josephine tried to straighten matters out. She sent for the bachelor to come to the theater and she met him in the presence of the manager's nice wife.

"My dear," said Jane's quondam fiancé, "I do not care to marry the young woman you are speaking about. That is all over. But I would be delighted if you will dine with me to-night!"

Annabel Josephine fled from him. Of course, she told Jane what he said.

"I'm afraid he just got tired, dear," she said. "Let us forget all about him!"

That was easier said than done. Jane had received a blow from which she did not recover for many a day.

And now other troubles came. For the first

time in two years, her stories came back: the editors did not seem to want them.

"I know that they are just as good as ever!" she sobbed to Peggy. "Do you suppose the public is tired of my stuff?"

"Brace up!" cheered the girls. "Put the best of yourself into a novel! The publishers want that, and your other two were so successful!"

Jane obeyed like a child. Royalties from her other books ceased to come in. "They aren't selling," was the publishers' laconic statement. One bank in which she kept an account failed: it left Jane terribly short of money. And she was no longer in demand for talks before women's clubs.

The novel was a dead failure: no house would bring it out. Jane had a long, lingering fever after that, and Peggy nursed her. It was another Jane who rose from the sick-bed, but it was a Jane at peace with her God.

"I'll have to begin all over again, girls," she said, with a wan smile, on her first day up. "Sister Catherine is right. No Catholic girl can prosper without prayer!"





# Aunt Ellen's Favorite Story

BY JEROME HARTÉ

NOT that Aunt Ellen could really remember the Civil War and all the excitement of those sad days. Bless you, no! When the war began she was a mere baby in arms, as all the family know, and her mother was sent hurrying away with her, up York State way, where her maternal grandparents awaited her coming with open arms and anxious hearts. Her father had gone to the war with other Confederate patriots, and it was no place for a homesick Northern girl and a month-old baby on the big plantation with its hordes of noisy slaves and grim, austere, unsympathetic "ole Missus," Aunt Ellen's haughty paternal grandmother. So Ellen and her young mother were to stay North until the war was over. Those were sad days!

You see, Aunt Ellen couldn't possibly have remembered what happened on the plantation before she left, or indeed, just after. The war was all over before she grew big enough to know or remember anything.

But Aunt Ellen was a great story-teller. She remembered everything she had ever heard, and she wove many stories into one beautiful whole that would keep us children wide-eyed and breathless as she told it. We all believed that she had actually been there when she described that awful night when the Union and Confederate soldiers, after having fought all day in the corn-fields beyond the slaves' quarters, carried on their warfare by the blue light of the new moon, their bullets and cannon-balls whizzing around the old house itself. She had not been there at all—she had heard about it from old Mammy!

It was also from old Mammy that she heard this story which I am going to tell you. We children used to call it Aunt Ellen's favorite, because she liked it better than any of her tales. She said that some day she was going to write it and have it published in a magazine, but Aunt Ellen died when she was still a very young woman, and she died, as she had been living for some time, a self-sacrificing Sister of Charity. You see, she was such a splendid nurse, it was a shame that she had not been born sooner, when she might have nursed dying and wounded soldiers upon the battlefield. She often spoke regretfully in this very

strain. And I reckon she was a so much greater nurse than writer of stories that it is just as well she left this story—although I am sorry no better pen than mine is about to give it to possible readers.

Aunt Ellen had an uncle, her father's brother, whom everybody in the Virginias used to call Marse George. He was not like Ellen's noble, unselfish father. He was a wild youngster whom nobody could control, a heavy drinker, and not always kind to his slaves. He fooled away his time with fast horses and fast friends in the city, coming home to the plantation every now and then to sober up after a spree. He had lost his faith in God, and, although not everybody knew it, his grim, severe old mother shed bitter, bitter tears and prayed desperately for the soul of her foolish son. Only old Mammy, ole Missus's favorite slave, knew what a heartache Marse George was to his mother. She breathed the first happy sigh she had known in years when the manhood in her son George asserted itself and prompted him to go fight for his country. With Marse George to the war went his nigger man, Sam—and Aunt Ellen's favorite story, woven about those two, is as follows:

Marse George had been drinking again. He was just coming home from Fredericksburg and a round of holiday gaiety, and he was not pleased at the aspect of the old country-house with its yard full of slaves lounging after a hot day in the fields. A scowl was on his face as black Eben guided the high-mettled bays up the driveway, and he swore savagely and spat at a shiny-faced pickaninny who ran alongside.

Ole Missus was eighty, with snow-white hair and a withered jaw that was strong and self-willed like her son's, and she walked with a cane. She was standing on the side piazza as Eben drove up, talking to a big, strapping black fellow, Marse George's Sam. Her voice was high-pitched and rasping, and its very tone carried unquestioning command. No wonder that Aunt Ellen's timid little Northern mother was afraid of her strange mother-in-law! It was not until years afterward that she knew that a sweet, white soul lay under the harsh exterior.

Sam was old Mammy Dinah's son. Mammy had been Marse George's nurse and Sam and Marse George had been born in the same hour. Ole Missus, then the beautiful young mistress for whose kindness and sweetness every slave on the

place fell down and adored her, gave the new colored baby to be the sole property of her new son.

The children had grown up together, drawing nourishment from the same fount, cradled in the same nursery, tended by the same black, loving hands. And Sam had been Marse George's man ever since, paying his devotion unstintingly to a master who was humane and indulgent except when he was drunk.

Before the high-mettled bays were fairly stopped, Marse George leapt from the carriage to the piazza. Quite accidentally he fell against Sam, who, with the movement that a falling man will use, threw up his hands. One black, ascending hand caught the flushed cheek of Marse George. The blow was trifling and obviously an accident, but Marse George turned with an ugly oath and, having raised his heavy cane high in the air, he brought the sharp thing with all the force of his muscular arm and a stinging sweep upon the forehead of the negro. The stick was of diamond cut, loaded at the end. It made a good weapon.

Sam staggered, wiping the blood from his eyes. The sandpapered whiteness of the piazza floor



caught the dripping blood in a wavering stream.

Ole Missus struck her cane upon the polished stones. "Drunk again!" cried she, with fine scorn, in the shrill, rasping voice that Aunt Ellen's mother so feared. "Sam was doing nothing. I reckon that's why you hit him!" She brought out the last words with biting sarcasm.

Marse George swaggered unsteadily past his indignant mother and into the house. Every slave fled at his noisy approach. Sam slunk away, Mammy Dinah got down to scour the piazza floor, and ole Missus went sputtering into the garden. The incident might have been forgotten in a day, but that the blow made Sam ill, thick though his skull was, and when he got up and about again, he had an ugly scar across his temple.

Not many months after this, it was autumn, and Aunt Ellen was north with her tiny daughter. Marse George and his brother, Aunt Ellen's fine, noble father, were gone to the war. It was a sad time!

Ole Missus and Mammy Dinah stood on the piazza at early day and peered long and anxiously toward the wide, white road. The usual sand-papered whiteness of the piazza floor was marred by the grimy print of many a foot, and a sense of



absolute desolation prevailed. The flowery luxuriance of the garden had run quite wild, mowed down in spots as by the invasion of a multitude; the cotton fields beyond bore the stamp of complete neglect; and the place where the slaves had been quartered was a smoldering ruin. Not a creature was in sight. Ole Missus was wan and gaunt and Mammy Dinah's eyes rolled wildly in her shaking head.

"Dey's all done gone, missus," she said for the hundredth time. "Dey ain't no use youah lookin', missus; the bery last niggah's done gone wid dem Norderd sodgers! I seed him go, I did! Wot's youah an' me agwine to' do? I reckon de nex' reg'ment cums 'long heah's gwine t' mek us mighty skeert!"

Ole Missus glanced away into the dusky, gloomy interior of her home. Many a treasure of those rooms, once the pride of her haughty heart, was missing to-day.

"God and His Blessed Mother will guide us and keep us, Dinah," said she, and her voice had lost its insistent sharpness and coldness. "Let us pray to them for help in the darkness and despair of this hour."

The two old women, one white, one black, stole

back into the shadows of the deserted house. They drew each shutter and barred each door, and Mammy lighted the logs in the big fireplace because it was chill, and set lighted candles on the polished marble-topped table, because of the dusk of the room. They knelt to pray, ole Missus setting up her splendid crucifix beside the candles. Mammy Dinah moaned as she prayed and gave voice to frequent fears, as is the nature of her race, but ole Missus said no word other than her whispered petitions to Him above. Except once, when Dinah spoke of the thought nearest both their hearts. "Dem Norderen folks went toward de ribber, didn' dey, missus?" she asked.

Ole Missus put her face in her hands and groaned. "Toward de ribber" was where Marse George's regiment had pitched camp last night. The Union forces that had swooped down upon them at daybreak were doing a forced march, and ole Missus knew too well that they had some object-point in view. She had felt from the instant of their approach that Marse George's regiment was doomed.

Before the day had well begun—there was no sun, only a murky light in the dead sky—the sound of cannon and musketry rose above the wild

cry of the wind. The two old women held their breath. Well they knew the meaning of those noises and why they came from "down toward de ribber"! All day, with slight cessation the battle raged; all day the aged listeners sat or knelt, with wild, straining faces and parched lips. Mammy Dinah would have talked, but ole Missus could not.

Night came. The wind died at last, and rain fell, dashing against the closed shutters of the house. Ole Missus had crawled into her great arm-chair and sat crouching there, her crucifix clutched in her withered hands; Dinah huddled before the fire, its flickering light casting strange shadows on her ghastly face. They were waiting for they knew not what.

Long after the sounds of battle had ceased, long after darkness had descended, they heard a heavy, uncertain crunching on the gravel beneath the windows and a lurching step on the piazza. Mammy Dinah clasped her mistress about the knees and fell to sobbing silently, with a wild fear. Ole Missus kissed her dear Saviour's image upon the cross and muttered incoherently.

The halting step came to the door of the entry near by, and a rubbing, thumping noise followed. It was so feeble that it was ghost-like. Ole Missus

strove to rouse her dead strength. She tottered to her feet, Dinah still clinging about her knees. "Get up, Dinah," she whispered, with a touch of her old command. "I reckon somebody's in trouble out there."

She hobbled to the entry, followed by the shaking but faithful negro, and tugged at the fastenings. "Who's there?" she called.

"He's wounded, missus," began a voice, and it was Mammy Dinah who tore open the last bolt and flung back the great door.

In from the darkness, the wind, and the rain, staggered a big black fellow, and in his arms he carried a white Confederate soldier. Both were covered with the grime and blood of battle, and both were wet and mud-coated. The white soldier was very still.

"He's wounded," panted Marse George's Sam, stumbling with his burden toward the sofa, "but the sarjent said he'd lib 'f I could get here——"

He lurched against the body of his burden as he laid it down, and fell back heavily against ole Missus. Mammy Dinah was bending above Marse George, feeling his heart. "He's a-libbin', missus!" she cried, joyfully.

Ole Missus stared stupidly at the ashen face of the slave as he lay, huddled limply at her feet. The ghostly candlelight dwelt horribly upon a narrow, knife-like cut across his forehead. Later, they found a bullet wound above his heart.

"I reckon poor Sam's dead," said ole Missus, staring without motion.

Mammy Dinah's grief for her own son was well-nigh exhausted before ole Missus, on her knees, thanked God for the chance He had given her to nurse her less worthy son back to life again. Until she died ole Missus said that, waking or sleeping, she always saw the scar upon faithful Sam's forehead.

Aunt Ellen's father came from the war with a few wounds, and Aunt Ellen and her mother went back South and took up their home again on the old Southern plantation. Many of the negroes came back to work for them; the house and grounds in a short time became as prosperous-looking and beautiful as ever. Marse George never drank: the war had sobered him for good and all. Aunt Ellen's mother never could understand why she had held dear "ole Missus" in awe, and until she died, Aunt Ellen herself remembered with loving tears a thousand little ways and words of

this sweet old Southern lady whose pride had been so humbled by her war troubles.

You see, Mammy Dinah told Aunt Ellen all those stories with which she used to entrance and frighten us. If Aunt Ellen had become a story-writer, she could have told the world all Mammy's stories, I suppose; but Aunt Ellen was such a grand Sister, we children reckoned that her prayers did Mammy Dinah and the world a heap more good!



# The Shaft of Light

BY JEROME HARTE

THE engagement of Helen Doyle and Jack Lansing had not been announced, the girl was not yet wearing her ring. There were reasons for this. Helen's love had been given to a man not of the faith that sustains us, given almost in spite of herself, she would have told you, in one sweep: love at first sight it had been for both of them, rare though that is in the world to-day. But Helen, devoted, common-sense Catholic that she was, was openly and frankly determined never to marry Jack until he had become a member of her Church. Her love for him, she admitted, she could not help; but marrying him would be quite another matter! He must see the light before that happy day.

And Helen was a keen little woman. She knew that her fiancé's intellect was of the caliber that would in time see truth and logic, even the truth and logic of religion. He had no belief, he affirmed. If any Church was right, it must be that one which had been built upon the rock of Christ and had endured unchanged through two thousand

years. He was no Protestant! On the other hand, he had been trained in a godless home and a godless school and he had neither knowledge nor hope in an all-abiding force. It was not his fault, you might well say. But Helen had a weapon that she knew Jack could not cope with—the weapon of prayer. It had never failed her; it would not now. She knew, even as she knew that she lived and breathed, that a way would be shown her to teach belief to her lover, that the truth would be revealed to him in God's own time and in God's own way, if it were best. Only those who have the true perspective of life and its divine Giver can appreciate the peace and hope that dwelt in the pure mind of Helen Doyle.

For months Jack Lansing had been earnestly studying the tenets of the Catholic religion, determined to believe and adopt it; but acceptance had not come.

"I really will be a Catholic, Helen," he would say again and again. "I want to be! But sometimes it seems irreconcilable. You see, I wasted a lot of time in reading Darwin and a few old philosophers, who tried to work out all things so beautifully by the rule of three. I'm fed up on them, I guess, but their theories get all in my way

when I am studying Catholic Doctrine. Let me be a Catholic, dear, without believing everything!"

But Helen put up her hands in horror. "No, no, no," she cried, as often as he said this, "you could not do that! Better for you to remain an unbeliever!"

"Then you won't marry me?" the man would protest, in a panic.

"No," was always Helen's thoughtful, quiet answer, "I never will!"

At which Jack grew sober and unhappy, and went back, with renewed vigor, to his efforts to accept the faith.

To all the outer forms of worship in the Catholic Church he was a devotee—although, sometimes, he admitted that this was chiefly because he could thereby spend more time at Helen's side. He went with her to church each Sunday, and, strangely enough, he had a horror of arriving one minute late at Mass. The solemnity of the service had earned deep and abiding reverence from his fine nature. During the Sacrifice he was most attentive and respectful always, and only the side-long glances of adoration that he permitted himself to cast, now and then, at the fair girl kneeling, rapt and star-eyed, beside him in the high,

dark pew proved that his whole devotion was not given to the priestly offices at the altar.

And when, Mass over, they strolled out from the church, Jack playfully groaned a little over the hard benches on which he knelt to please Helen, and he made laughing, wry faces over the soreness of his knees, the length of the sermon, and the frequent changes of position during the space of the Mass. Then he would reiterate that the joy of kneeling beside his sweetheart compensated for his aching bones, and could lover say more? Not that Helen appeared pleased at this. Her religious little soul felt, above its pride in his worship of her, a rebellion at his persistent placing of her above the exhibition of worship in her faith.

Business often took Jack out of the city for a week or two at a time. To the reader who has forgotten the thrills of love, this may sound like a short while. To Jack it seemed an eternity! He wrote Helen every evening, sent her long-distance telephone messages, telegrams along the line, and a gift or two, souvenirs, perhaps, of some interesting place through which he was passing. Helen watched for the postman and the messenger boy with eager eyes, and the sound of the telephone

bell sent her running to answer it with shining eyes!

It was the night before one of these trips, and they had been talking over serious things together. The near approach of a separation had made Jack genuinely downhearted, and Helen laughingly half-serious. She was a mischief-loving, mocking young woman, often, and one of her set purposes was to give Jack not too much hope or sureness in her love for him. Not that that was all mischief. Helen was trying hard to shape their future, calmly, afraid almost of the joy that love seemed to offer, fearful of the shoals of heart-misery that would be hers if God willed not that Jack see the truth at last.

"I don't believe in prayer, of course," said Jack, dismally. "I've tried to believe in it, heaven knows, these last few months. But to mumble things with my lips when my heart says, 'For goodness' sake, old man, who are you praying to?' is no good task! Last night, after I went away, I sat smoking and thinking of you and this bone of contention between us, and I cried out to the shadows, 'Why on earth can't I believe in her religion?' The shadows did not answer me. 'If I could only pray to her God,' I breathed. And

something answered me, something within myself you will say, little wiseacre. But it brought me a measure of comfort. 'You do pray,' whispered the comfort, 'when your soul hopes for Helen's love.' "

"You are a very good talker," teased Helen, "but you do not impress me unduly!"

Jack Lansing laughed. It was his nature to pretend to face the seriousness of life with a jingle of bells, and then one could not but meet Helen's bright eyes with answering merriment.

Lansing could write her without the laughs. Away from her smiles and cool repartee, he could set down his disbelief and doubts without fear of interruption. Helen had to hear them to the end, then. She always replied with stinging sarcasm and scorn—and Jack then had to hear her, too, through to the last page! They played a straight, frank game of love, these two strong-minded young persons, but they played it with good nature, and Helen was praying hard to win.

In one of his letters on that trip, Jack wrote: "I have been thinking and thinking to-night of the worry that my irreligious convictions give you. I would to God that it were in my power to become a Catholic to-morrow, for there is nothing



in the big, wide world that I would not do to please you! Now you are going to write and ask me how I dare call on God, whom I know not nor will accept. I will forestall your retort, and answer it unspoken! You have taught me to know Him, dearest, and I am sick at heart that I can not accept Him entire, as He lives in your faith. But the leaven of disbelief has entered deep into my soul, and I can not rid myself of it by merely wishing to do so. I hope against hope that I will in time come round to your way of thinking; such things do happen, especially when men are older. How much rather would I have your strong, pure faith than my own haunting, nebulous half-beliefs! Not that I am dishonest when I say again and again that I deny nothing nor affirm a contrary theory. It may all be true, or it may be that you and the Christian world believe fairy tales and that Darwin is quite right. I want to know and to believe for your sake, Helen! If your God would only send to me a proof, something that will convince my reason!"

Helen read with troubled, musing eyes. Had she but realized it, the beautiful part of Jack Lansing's nature was awake, and he had learned to pray, though perhaps keenly unaware of it him-

self. And somehow, although he had not dared to tell Helen this, he felt that a way or measure of proof would be opened to him.

The subject of telepathy is a large one. Whether or not there is anything in the science is too long an argument for my subject. I do think, however, that we get impressions and mysterious news from our absent loved ones, if they need us and they and we have the grace of God in our hearts.

Jack had been away a week and it was to be another week at least before he could hope to get his business done. He was not a man to hurry home for a whim. That he came in answer to a mysterious vision was as strange and significant as the vision itself.

Jack's daily letter had come that morning. It was also his day to telephone, and Helen did not go very far away from the sound of the little bell. All day she expected it, but no long-distance message was received. At night, after she had retired, came a yellow envelope.

"Am coming home Wednesday morning early. Will 'phone on arrival," said the telegram.

Helen was not a little puzzled; it was unlike her lover to come back so unexpectedly. His letter that day had said nothing about a possible return.

She prayed that nothing was wrong with his health or his business. The prospect of seeing him so soon, on the morrow, made her dreams very pleasant.

When Jack telephoned next morning, he did not wait for her mother to call Helen to the receiver. That young woman was still dressing.

"Is Helen well?" he cried. "Thank heaven for that! Tell her I am coming right out on the car! It will be all right, won't it?"

"Now what on earth do you suppose is the matter?" said Helen.

Jack's face was pale when he ran up the front steps and into the house at Helen's ready opening of the door. "To think you are alive and well!" he exclaimed, catching and crushing her to his heart. "I expected—oh! Helen, I do not know now what I did expect!"

Helen gasped. "You haven't been drinking, have you?" she laughed. "For pity's sake, tell me what brought you home!"

"You!" said he, stroking her soft hair. "I had a dream, a presentiment—I don't know what it was, now that I am here!"

"And that made you leave business and come home!" said Helen. "What a goose you are!"

He laughed with her. "I guess I am!" he answered. "But you are all right? You haven't been sick? You haven't had an accident? You haven't been in any danger?" He caught and kissed her again as she was leading him into the sitting-room, where an open grate fire was burning.

"Goodness, no!" cried Helen. "Please tell me what is the matter?"

The man was strangely silent a minute, staring into the flames. "I suppose I am a bit wild," he said, laughing uneasily. "It must have been a dream, although I was quite sure that I was awake. I was staying with Will Butts in his bachelor flat, you know, and Will was at the theater. I was smoking before his wood fire and—and I saw you, Helen!"

"Do tell!" cried Helen. "How provokingly vague you are! Where did you see me?"

"In a park equestrian path. It did not look familiar; but then they all look alike. You were crossing leisurely, your eyes on the ground, when a horseman turned the sharp curve and was upon you. I was near enough to touch you, but I could not move! That was not all. I saw something else—" He stopped, with an impenetrable look.

"Have you been through the park?" he demanded.

"No, nor in the path where only horses go!" said Helen. "What else did you see?"

"I must have been dreaming!" he cried. "And yet, I could have sworn——"

"What else did you see?" persisted Helen.

"I looked at the clock at 9.28. As soon as I saw you, I tried to scream out, and then I jumped to my feet. The clock said 9.30. Could I have slept and dreamed a dream in two minutes?"

"I don't believe you have been listening to me!" put in Helen, with a low curtsy. "I asked you, sir, what was the something else you saw?"

"And I am not going to tell you!" he said, with a strange glance. "I think I must be a bit crazy and I will not let you laugh at me! I threw a note on Will's desk telling him I had to get home at once, snatched my hat and coat and made for the station. I just caught a train. The porter sent you a telegram for me, from the first station. I must go back to-morrow night, or my business will suffer. I didn't even bring my luggage!"

Helen did not ask him again to tell her the rest of his vision, nor did she pout, as heroines in and out of stories are apt to do. She was a wise young

lady. She knew that the surest way to get Jack or any man to tell something he had vowed not to tell was to pretend to have no curiosity about it! However, despite her cleverness, her little ruse did not work that time, as on other occasions: her lover did not tell her that day; and at luncheon time, next day, she was still unacquainted with the last part of his vision.

They had luncheon at his club downtown, and they walked home together. It was a long, beautiful walk, through streets of many mansions and flanked with tall, bare trees. There was no snow upon the ground, but the grass was yellow and dead and the fallen leaves were colorless and rotting. The wind blew crisp, with a moaning song, through the tree-boughs. At intervals they passed over the broad, frost-caked roadways of cross streets. There were few carriages or pedestrians out.

Helen had not outgrown her childish ways. They seemed to belong to her ready laughter, her fair, rebellious hair, and her piquant little face. When out with Jack, his adoring, patronizing way made her particularly childish and full of fun and frolic. That day she was bubbling over with spirits. A dainty chipmunk, poised at the edge of a wide cross street, was frightened at their ap-



proach. He ran a little out into the road, and turned, with a charming motion, to gaze back at them over his shoulder. Helen laughed aloud and clapped her hands with glee. The chipmunk darted on again and, like a shot, Helen was after him, running across and up the roadway, like some beautiful, graceful animal.

Jack laughed from the curbstone. How could a lanky six-footer follow a mischievous bit of flying femininity in pursuit of a chipmunk? The little fellow reached a tree and shot up it, like a streak of lightning. Helen stopped beneath the tree and stood laughing up at the high, stark branches. Her fair hair was blowing in a dozen new little curls about her flushed face and her eyes were dancing with the joy of outdoors. She chirruped irresistibly to the chipmunk. "Come down, come down!" she cried. "I won't hurt you!"

Jack started leisurely toward her, laughing aloud in fond amusement at her childishness. Helen had forgotten, seemingly, everything but the tiny furred animal. And then a horseman shot around the sharp corner beyond her. He was clinging low over his steed's head and there were strained, anxious lines about his mouth. The stirring wild beauty of the day had fired the animal's

blood and brain, and for the time being he was beyond his rider's control.

Jack Lansing uttered one mad cry, "Helen!" as he started on a run toward the girl in the path of the horse. Until that moment he had not realized how weirdly gray and sunless was the day. She heard her lover's cry and the clatter of the horse's hoofs. She turned, confused, toward the cry, stepping back a mere pace toward the tree. The snorting horse tore by her, brushing her skirt and shoulder with his flying heels, and Jack, sprinting in her direction, narrowly escaped, by an athletic bound, being knocked over by the runaway. He was chalk-white and trembling when he reached her side, but Helen was laughing.

"My! but that was close!" she said.

"Close! Oh, dear God!" whispered Jack Lansing. He clutched her arm with his nerveless fingers. "Helen," he said, brokenly, his eyes clinging to her.

"It's all over!" cried Helen, with unfailing philosophy. "Cheer up!"

They moved on down the street, the man with unsteady steps. "Tell me, Helen," he said, "what you believe of guardian angels. I know you have told me before, but I want to be quite, quite sure.

You have a guardian angel to protect you, isn't that it? And the angel is tall, with wings and flowing robes, and he follows you ever, bathed in shining light? Have I remembered it right?"

"Yes, you have," said Helen, wondering.

"I saw it in my dream," he said, his voice trembling. "It stood behind you in a shaft of beautiful white light, as the horse bore down upon you. Then I jumped and it was gone. I could not tell you of it yesterday. And now, as I ran toward you, I saw it again, Helen—taller than you by far and white as snow. It simply stood there behind you, one hand near or on your shoulder, I could not tell which. If there had been any sun, I could be skeptical! But the world to-day is absolutely color-dead! Look at that gray sky! Yet, little girl, behind you was a dazzling, glorious shaft of light, and the angel stood in that!"

Helen's eyes were big and shining, and a tremulous smile played about her lips. "I never forget to pray to my guardian," she said, with childish simplicity. "Somehow I always feel safe then!"

All lightness of thought and laughter had left Jack's transfigured face. "I said that I was look-

ing and longing for a proof that there were the beautiful things that you believed in, and I felt that, until I received such a proof, my mind could not subscribe to faith in a God! My blasphemy seems like a horrible dream to-day! I did not know I could be answered from on high! Will God take me in, Helen?"

# The Tie That Binds

BY MAY LOWE

“THERE certainly is not anything very enthusiastic or lover-like about it, even if it is an offer of marriage,” mused Carrie Strong, as she laid aside Frank Blake’s letter after a second reading. “His recent visit to the East has awakened a desire for a home, a luxury he has not enjoyed since he was a boy. And he feels, though our acquaintance dates only from that visit, that I would be a very suitable person to help make that home; and, further, that he will, in case I accept his offer, endeavor always to be a kind husband.”

Then she laughed rather bitterly.

“My letter,” she continued to herself, “shall match the enthusiasm of his. I shall tell him that, as I have been teaching for ten years and am worn out in body and mind, and almost in soul, I accept his polite offer of a home; and I shall add that I will try faithfully to perform the duties of a wife. And, as I quite agree with him that, as we have no relatives to consult, there is

no need of delay, the nuptials will be celebrated one month from to-day."

As his letter showed, Frank Blake was not used to women; his acquaintance with women of refinement had been limited. His life, for the most part, had been spent in Western mining-camps, and, indeed, for a few years past (since coming to the little mining-town of Xantic) he had been used to none, except Mrs. Mullaney. But he was not so badly off in this, after all, for Mrs. Mullaney, both as to *avoirdufois* and to good, sterling traits of character, was worth any two ordinary women.

She had been the wife of "old Mullaney," who kept one of the saloons in Xantic. No one had ever heard her say a word against her husband or her husband's business, but it was noticed among the miners that she never came down to assist him when he was especially busy, as some of them had known the wives of saloon-keepers in other mining-camps to do.

When Mullaney died his wife mourned him conscientiously, though not bitterly, having tenderly nursed him through a wearying illness. At his death, Bill Jenks, who had conducted the business in the interim, remarked, "Well, I guess



Mis' Mullaney 'll have to come to it and run the 'Jamboree,' for the old man didn't save up nothing, 'cept what he's got in the shape of the finest whisky and the most of it that I ever seen, and it stands to reason that she can't starve."

But Mrs. Mullaney didn't run the "Jamboree." The doors were closed for several weeks, and when they were opened not a barrel nor keg nor glass was to be seen. What had become of them no one ever knew, though Mrs. Mullaney congratulated herself on the fact (which she even remarked to some of the men) that she had fine kindlings enough to last her for years. And way down in the gulch the most surprising odor arose—so strong, in fact, that Bill Jenks asserted that every time he took a stroll home by way of the gulch he got almost as drunk as he had ever done when he had passed a night at the old "Jamboree."

This latter was soon transformed into the "Not-a-Drop Restaurant," and owing to the fact that Mrs. Mullaney was an excellent cook, and not to the qualifying adjective, soon became a popular resort. She was always busy, for she also patched and mended for "the boys" as if they had been her own.

It was to this woman that Frank Blake confided the fact that he was about to marry. And entrusting to her the task of fitting up the little house in proper shape for the bride, he set forth for Indiana.

Although Frank Blake still cherished in his heart the religion of his boyhood, his environment had long been such that he could now scarcely be termed a practical Catholic. And though he felt rather a shock at being confronted with the fact that a Protestant clergyman would perform the ceremony, his objections were not strenuous, and were soon overruled.

"Why, I did not even know you were a Catholic!" said the bride-to-be, "and besides, I should, of course, expect my own minister to marry me."

When, a week later, they arrived home, Mrs. Mullaney met them at the door and welcomed them. She had, poor, simple soul that she was, expected Mrs. Blake to go into raptures over the beauties of the new home; but—perhaps because she was very tired—there was no answering light in the bride's eyes as she gazed coldly around upon what to her seemed poverty and almost squalor. She thawed a little when she saw the supper that

had been prepared, but her disapproval knew no bounds when she found that Mrs. Mullaney, the cook, was to sit at table with them. She scarcely waited for the good woman to be gone, to remark icily:

"I did not think that our first meal together would have to be marred by the presence of a coarse old Irish woman."

Her husband started.

"Carrie," he said, gravely, "Mrs. Mullaney has been a good friend to me, and will be such to you if you will let her."

The laugh with which the bride responded had not a pleasant ring. "In my former life I was not accustomed to such friends, and I believe I'll not begin to cultivate them now."

Frank tried not to show how vexed he felt, as he replied, "You will do me a favor, at least, if you do not show her too plainly how you feel about her." And then he added, with a man's idea of making things right: "I should think, when you are the only two women in the camp, that you would take to one another, and be great friends."

Carrie's face turned white. "You don't mean to tell me—you can not mean anything so preposterous—that you have brought me into a wil-

derness where I shall have absolutely no society except of that creature?"

Frank was silent. Perhaps he was conscience-stricken, perhaps he was only astonished. For the fact was, that unaccustomed as he had been to anything different, and being a man, this thought had never once struck him.

The gulf between them widened day by day. What he needed was sympathy and companionship; what she needed, sympathy and protection; but her former life had tended to hold in subjection, if not lessen, those qualities which are a woman's chief charm, and the quality which had gradually usurped their place was that spirit of independence which is so opposed to happiness.

Frank Blake loved his wife, but he was repulsed by her coldness, and in consequence of his ignorance of women he did not know how to manage her. So, after several futile attempts to enlist her sympathies, he began again to take his perplexities to Mrs. Mullaney.

"It seems odd, Mrs. Mullaney," he remarked, upon one of these occasions, "I used to think that when a man marries his wife becomes his one sympathizer, but here I'm afflicting you with my affairs, just as I used to do."

Mrs. Mullaney had been waiting for this opportunity and she now seized it with avidity. She spoke gently:

"I'm old enough to be your mother, and I want to talk to you plain. I was glad to have you tell me your troubles when you had nobody else to tell 'em to, and to advise you when you wanted my advice; but the way you used to look at it is right—a man's wife is the only confidant he ought to have."

"But Carrie does not seem to care for my confidence, and I do not think she loves me," stammered Frank.

"Oh, she loves you all right," cried the cheerful widow; "can't you see she's not got used to our heathenish way of livin', yet? Just give her time." Then laying her hand on the young man's arm, "Just you wait till the baby comes; there's nothing like that to bring out a woman. It's what I've longed for all my life, but God knew I was not in a position to bring up children right."

In all her life this was the first time Mrs. Mullaney had ever complained against her husband or his business.

"You are an angel, Mrs. Mullaney!" exclaimed Frank.

"I'd have to lose several pounds before I could be one with any comfort," laughed she. Then she added, "And you're a big, silly boy. Just you do like your old Mother Mullaney says, and things will turn out all right."

When the great event occurred, Frank was surprised to see in his wife a wealth of affection of which he had believed her utterly incapable. But it was not long before he perceived that this love was to be expended solely upon the baby. Constantly, the cry went up, "I wish, Frank, that you would try to be a little less noisy; you will waken the baby!" or, "You will frighten the baby out of her senses, Frank, with so much confusion!"

The camp went wild over the advent of the little stranger. Two partners who "struck it rich" upon the day of her birth insisted upon naming their claim for her and sharing with her the proceeds therefrom. The one made the offer in the blunt, hearty Western vernacular, while the other, who, rumor said, was the son of an English lord, preferred his request in the polished language of an academician.

Frank himself was in raptures. It is doubtful whether he or Mrs. Mullaney (who had established herself as head nurse) evinced the greater pride



while showing off the baby's good qualities to "the boys." For they all came, saw, and were conquered. To such a degree, indeed, that they all, severally and individually, insisted upon being her godfather. Serious trouble was averted by Frank's promise that they should be, collectively, her godfather, the Englishman, who was found to be a Catholic, to make the responses, in company with Mrs. Mullaney, as godmother.

Here arose another cause of estrangement between the parents, for when this matter was broached, and Frank spoke of sending for a priest that the baby might be baptized, his wife curtly objected. He tried to urge the matter gently, but all his arguments being met with a dogged refusal, he at length said:

"God knows I am not a Catholic to be proud of, but there is one thing certain—my child must and shall be baptized; with your consent, if possible; without it, if necessary."

And he had his way, though under the latter condition.

Carrie was displeased with the attentions which the men bestowed upon her child, but as she had, perhaps, found that they were impervious to her dislike or sarcasm, the only protest she made was

to remark to her husband that she "presumed it would be impossible to impress upon a crowd of rough miners the fact that she did not care to share her child with them."

And poor Frank, thinking in his heart that she did not wish to share her even with him, replied that he hoped that she would not endeavor to impress it upon them. So, for a few months, the men, innocent of any intention of giving offense, worshiped the most wonderful creature they had seen for years. The cutting of her first tooth was an occasion of general rejoicing; the first time she lisped "da-da" at Frank the report spread like wildfire and there was a rush to the Blake cabin to ascertain if she could do it again. The wee goddess was impartial in her favors, and it was only a short time before she screamed "da-da" at all of them, indiscriminately. But the day that she walked! Not one of them will ever forget it, and Bill Jenks will go down in history as the happy man to whom she took the first step.

It was when she had been walking but a few weeks that the end came. She was stricken with one of those fatal maladies which sometimes attack children and carry them off before their friends fully realize that they are ill. The little

mining-town seemed stricken dumb. The men, though feeling that something terrible had befallen them, could not comprehend that the baby was dead. Bill Jenks at length awoke from the lethargy into which all had fallen and walked to a larger town, miles away, and came back carrying a little white coffin.

Frank, in his agony, turned to his old Irish friend, and it was upon her capacious bosom that he leaned his head as he wept his heart out. His wife sat by the coffin, a hard, sullen look upon her face, as if she were defying God for stealing her treasure. Mrs. Mullaney had arranged the bright curls and had arrayed the little form in its prettiest white dress, but to Frank's appeal that she should say something to Carrie, she shook her head. "It won't do any good to talk to her, dear; crying is the only thing that will do her any good, now. You know she's not spoken a word since the little thing died. Oh, if she would only cry! If she could only cry!"

And Frank, utterly hopeless (for he had exhausted all his resources to arouse her) now stood helpless beside her. The men came in, noiselessly, one by one, and casting a respectful look upon Mrs. Blake and wringing Frank's hand, gazed, a

little while, upon the sleeping baby and passed out again. The Irishwoman stood opposite the parents. With a sudden impulsive movement she laid her roughened hand upon that of the child, while she murmured, "Oh, the sweet little hand! the sweet little hand!"

A look of agony leaped into the eyes of the mother. Her lips twitched. With a convulsive start she struggled to her feet. For one instant she stood, beating the air with her hands as if battling for her breath, then stretching out her arms to her husband, with a look in her eyes which he had never seen there before, she cried, "Oh, Frank, our baby! our baby!"

He held her clasped within his arms as if he would never let her go, gently stroking her hair, while their tears mingled. But out of the depths of their sorrow gleamed a ray of happiness, for they both knew that through losing their baby they had found each other.

Before the second little one's coming the couple had a serious and loving talk, the result of which was that, with Frank's help, the young wife began a course of instructive reading, with a view to coming into the Church. And when, in the course of time, the new baby was baptized, the

mother received the Sacrament at the same time.

The second little daughter was hailed with the renewed homage of the men. And though she never seemed quite so wonderful as the first baby, she was soon their idol. And there was in Mrs. Blake's manner, toward them as well as toward Mrs. Mullaney, a warmth and cordiality which they felt rather than comprehended.

"It's a toss-up," asserted Bill Jenks, "which one the boys think the most of—Frank's wife, or the kid."





# The Beachcombe Mystery

BY MARY T. WAGGAMAN

“THERE’S something wrong.” Miss Janet Morris closed the sitting-room door cautiously, and dropped into a capacious rocking-chair with an asthmatic sigh. “There’s something wrong about those Martins, certain.”

Her city cousin looked up from his book lazily. Mr. Paul Dugald had come to Beachcombe for the one lazy month he allowed himself in a long year, and was not to be distracted from his hard-earned repose. So he answered quietly:

“My dear Cousin Janet, it is very plain that there *is* something wrong. Poor Mrs. Martin is dying.”

“It ain’t that,” said Miss Janet, dismissing the king of terrors as a passing shadow. “I ain’t finding fault with the poor creetur for that, though dying folks isn’t what I’d choose for best-room boarders. And though it goes agin me, that he’s hed three preachers, to say nothing of ez many elders in the family, to hev graven images set up in my house, I could put up with their being

Romanists. But—there's double-faced dealings going on I don't like at all. That white-faced girl, mark my word, is a deceiver."

"Miss Letty?" said Mr. Dugald, somewhat startled. "She certainly doesn't look it."

"You can't count no ways on looks," replied Miss Janet, sagely. "The worst thief I ever had in my house was a girl I took in for help, that had the face of an angel. An' the way she could sing hymns and bake pies! Well, I thought I had a born blessing for three days, and then she let in a gypsy lover that carried off a dozen silver spoons and great-grandmother's sugar-tongs."

"Oh, I think the spoons are safe with Miss Letty," said the gentleman with a laugh.

"I ain't saying they're not," said Miss Janet, to whom the family preachers and elders had bequeathed literal views—proof against all levity. "But what I *do* say and think is that she is fooling and deceiving that poor dying woman. It ain't her real mother, you know, and stepdaughters ain't to be trusted nohow. But the poor creetur has a natural born son that she is begging and praying to see before she dies. And that girl is keeping them apart certain."

"Keeping a son from his dying mother!" ex-

claimed Mr. Dugald. "Impossible, my dear Cousin Janet! How could she?"

"Stops the letters," answered Miss Janet, briefly. "They ain't never sent, I know, though the poor woman, sick as she is, keeps a-writing them. And more than that, the poor soul talks of getting letters from her boy that were never in my mail-bag. I know, for I unlock it myself, and there's not been a scrap of paper in it for either of them in the two months they've spent here."

"Then how can the letters come?" asked Mr. Dugald, stretching himself rather wearily.

"They don't come at all," was the startling reply. "That girl Letty writes them."

"Tut, tut, my dear Cousin Janet—you're seeing things at night!" laughed the young gentleman. "What possible reason could the young lady have for such forgery?"

"I don't know," answered Miss Janet, grimly, "unless it's money. The poor sick creetur ain't long for this world, as anybody can see, and it stirs me up certain to see that little white-faced Jesuit of a girl a fooling and deceiving her. And I just felt I must tell somebody or—burst," said Miss Janet, hysterically. "You're a lawyer and ought to know what's to be done about it." And

Mr. Paul Dugald, assistant district attorney though he was in his native town, found the question a "staggering" one.

For gossip and busybody as Miss Janet doubtless was, he knew her to be at the same time shrewd, keen, kindly, and absolutely truthful. The quaint old farmhouse on the New England coast had been a holiday place for him ever since early boyhood, when it had belonged to Miss Janet's father, his maternal uncle. He knew the family traits well, and felt that the good, if narrow-minded, old spinster, would not speak so seriously without reason. Yet outlined against this black suspicion there rose before his mental vision a face so fair, so pure, so sweet, under its halo of wind-blown hair, that he would have staked reputation, nay, life itself, on Letty Martin's truth and innocence.

Two months ago Mrs. Martin and her step-daughter had come to Beachcombe in hopes that its absolute quiet and seclusion, aided by the invigorating salt air, would arrest the rapid progress of the fatal disease from which the elder lady was suffering. Quiet, refined women, they gave as little trouble as possible, paid the moderate board promptly, but from the first Miss Janet's Puritan soul had recoiled from their religion.

The crucifix on the mantel, the little lamp burning before the statue of the Sacred Heart, the beads twined around the dying woman's wasted hands, were all, she felt, "marks of the beast," against which her sturdy ancestors had thundered. She was prepared to find something wrong, and had found it accordingly.

But she had done more. She had roused Mr. Paul Dugald from a state of passive admiration into keen and perplexed interest. For Mr. Dugald was one of the lawyers who are born as well as made, veritable sleuthhounds of justice. Indeed he was at present recuperating after a legal battle that had taxed all his powers. With the most brilliant counsel in the city arrayed against him he had landed a young malefactor behind justly-deserved prison-bars, and made an "example" of him. But this case . . .

"I'll not bother about it," resolved Mr. Dugald, picking up his Scotch cap for a stroll to the beach. "Miss Janet is a suspicious old bigot, looking for mischief and mystery. I came here for rest and I'm going to take it. That fight with Corliss and Coke over that young scamp, Lester Jerrold, took the wind out of me."

And the speaker sternly dismissed the vision



of that pale young face with its nimbus of gold-brown hair, and took his way to the shore, where the incoming tide was breaking against the rocks, a land veiled in silvery mists, where for years earth and sea had been striving for mastery. Dugald stretched himself in his favorite place—in the shelter of an old hulk, probably some Spanish galleon wrecked here when this shore was a shoal. With his hands clasped under his head he was watching the shimmering mists that broke and met and broke again, giving brief glimpses of sea and sky and foam-washed reef, when a voice on the other side of the wreck startled him into attention.

For it was Miss Letty Martin who spoke in sweet, trembling tones.

“Oh, Tim, dear, old, faithful Tim, I can trust you, I know.”

“Sure ye can, miss,” was the brief rejoinder. “I’d give me life for you and yours. Murther an’ ouns, though, it’s harrud to see ye hiding like this.”

“But I must, Tim, I must, as you know. It is the only way that I can keep our secret safe—the only way I can keep mama from hearing, knowing all. I’ve brought you the money, Tim, all I dared take. I had to steal it out of her



box last night while she was asleep—one hundred dollars, Tim.”

“That’s a dale, miss. Won’t she miss it?” was the anxious question.

“Oh, no, I don’t think so. She is too sick, too weak to notice anything. Oh, she can’t last long, Tim, and I am glad, I can’t help being glad, that it is so. For, for—” the low voice broke into a sob, “I feel that I can’t keep this up much longer. People at the house are beginning to suspect that there is something wrong now. And there is a lawyer from M—— down here, Tim.”

“A lawyer? Sure that is bad indade for ye, miss. Lawyers are the divils for finding out things ye don’t want them to know.”

“Oh, I know, I know, and I’ve been fairly cold with fear ever since he came. Tim, I don’t dare to meet his eyes—they seem to look me through and through. Oh, I’d run off and hide somewhere else, but mama is too sick to move. I feel that he is watching me, Tim.”

“Watching ye, is it? Bad luck to him, I’d like to break his head for it,” was the wrathful reply. “Never mind him, miss, darlint. Kape up a bowld face. It won’t be for long, and thin ye’ll be done with all this trouble and free to go

where yer harrut is calling ye. An' I'll take the money, miss, though whether it will do much good, I can't say."

"Oh, try, try; and tell him, Tim, when mama dies I will sell everything I can get my hands on, everything, Tim, and take all the money, and——"

The voices died into silence as the speakers walked away in the mists, and Mr. Dugald was left in the shelter, from which he had not ventured to stir since their unexpected coming; left fairly breathless with horror and dismay at this confirmation of Miss Janet's worst fears.

Letty Martin! Letty Martin, by her own confession a deceiver, a thief, hiding here from searching eyes, trembling with fear of betrayal, praying for the death of her trusting friend and guardian! Letty Martin! Keen lawyer that Mr. Dugald was, accustomed to searching dark and devious ways, he felt this was almost beyond his credence—yet her own words had convicted her.

And with that face! With those eyes that seemed limpid wells of truth, with that voice so sweet and broken even in its self-accusation. And then, with a sudden indignant revolt against the charm that had held him, Mr. Paul Dugald's professional wrath arose. Something ought to be

done, as Miss Janet had said. This girl's treachery should be exposed, that poor dying woman defended. For a good hour Mr. Dugald paced the beach in a state of most unprofessional perturbation. Then he heard his name called sharply in the distance and hurried back to meet Miss Janet panting with asthma and excitement at the farm-gate.

"She's dying!" the good lady gasped. "Poor Mrs. Martin is dying. They've sent for the doctor and the priest from L——, but nobody can do nothing, I am sure. She was took bad about an hour ago. The girl was out, and I ran up when I heard the poor creetur call. She had just done writing a letter to her son and the only words she could gasp was: 'Send for him! Oh, he will come now, I know. Send for him, send for my boy, my boy!' And I am going to do it," said good Miss Janet resolutely.

"By all means," said Mr. Dugald. "I'll gallop over to the telegraph office with a message myself—and see that it goes," he added grimly. "What's the address?"

"Here," said Miss Janet. "I took the letter almost from the poor creetur's dying hold, for I wouldn't risk no chances. Here's the address,

and—eh! good Lord, man, what's the matter?" for the gentleman was staring at the envelope like one struck dumb. "Whatever is the matter with you, Paul Dugald?"

"Lester Jerrold!" said Mr. Dugald, in a shaken voice. "Lester Jerrold! It is *his* mother that is dying and calling for him! Lester Jerrold's mother and—and—sister here!"

"What has come over you, man?"

"Lester V. Jerrold! That—that was his name—great heavens, and that poor mother does not know!" Mr. Dugald's voice was sharp with strange excitement.

"Know what?" demanded Miss Janet, desperately.

"That this young scamp is in the States Prison for forgery; that he has just been sentenced for—I see, I see!" a blinding flash of revelation burst upon Mr. Dugald. "This is the mystery that has bewildered us—this is that brave, beautiful girl's secret. She has been struggling to keep the boy's sin and shame from his dying mother, and we, Cousin Janet," the speaker's tone was one of unmitigated self-disgust, "we have been a pair of blind, suspicious fools!"

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A few hours later, when all was over and the gentle spirit had passed into a world to which earth's shame and sorrow do not reach, Mr. Dugald heard fuller explanation from the old white-haired priest who had come to minister to the dying woman.

Young Lester Jerrold, Mrs. Martin's son by a previous marriage, and her only child, had left home some three years before to find employment in the city of M——.

"And he was led into temptation there, I suppose," said Father Perrault, sadly.

"Rather," responded Mr. Dugald drily. "Forged his employer's name for ten thousand dollars and married a variety actress on the proceeds."

"Yes, I believe it was something of that sort, poor boy. It would have broken the mother's heart to hear, to know . . . For she was very ill, dying, the doctors said, already. And so this good child Letty resolved, with God's help, to keep this bitter pain and trial from her. Then it was that she brought her here, where no one knew, where no one but the good, faithful Irishman who had been their servant long ago would follow them. And here the little girl watched and



prayed that the poor lady might die in peace. She sent all the help she could get to the unhappy boy and his foolish wife. She kept the secret safe in her own aching heart. That was brave, that was good, do you not think so?"

"It was angelic," said Mr. Dugald, out of the depths of his self-reproach.

"Ah, well, perhaps, yes," said Father Perrault, with his little French shrug and smile.

"And if there is anything in the world I can do to atone—I mean to serve Miss Martin in her bereavement—I understand she is an orphan and alone—I—I am at her command in every way," said Mr. Dugald warmly.

"Yes, yes, you are very kind, I am sure, but—but she will not be alone, monsieur. Two of the good Sisters from La Misericorde will be here to-morrow morning to help, to comfort her. And when all is over they will take her home with them."

"To be a nun, you mean?" said Mr. Dugald, a chill of horror in his tone.

"So I think, I hope, monsieur," answered the old priest, simply. "It is the only life for earth's 'angels.' "



# Aunt Prue's Will

BY MARY T. WAGGAMAN

"THEY will have to marry each other, that's all," said Aunt Prue, decidedly.

"But, my dear Miss Elton," ventured little Lawyer Bland.

"No buts about it," interrupted Aunt Prue. "I never listened to any buts in my life. My house, my money and my land go together. I've got a nephew somewhere, I suppose—I haven't heard of his death. If he and Mary Jane Carleton will marry each other they can have everything I've got. If they won't I leave it all to Father Deane to found a home for old maids."

"Aged women," suggested the little lawyer.

"No!" snapped Aunt Prue, sharply. "Old maids, plain and straight. I'll have no men shirking their poor widows and mothers on my care. *Old maids* like myself, who have had sense enough to see that most men are crooked sticks or worse crutches. An old maids' home—put that down straight and sure. I never had my will broken in

life and won't in death. If any one tries it, well, he'll hear from me."

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And it was the will thus made that, three weeks later, was communicated in proper legal form to Mr. Richard Elton in his shabby student apartment in Paris, where that young gentleman was walking the hospitals in the footsteps of a world-renowned specialist.

Mr. Elton's comment on his late aunt's testament was too brief and forcible for repetition. In spite of her quarrel with his father before he was born, Aunt Prue's bank account and the old Elton homestead had always figured as pleasant possibilities in an ambitious future. Now—now—with another wrathful explosion, he tossed Lawyer Bland's communication to his friend and room-mate, Will Marsh.

"Seems to settle you pretty solidly," said Will. "Wife and fortune in one clip. Who is the Mary Jane Carleton that goes with the old lady's shekels? Do you know her?"

"I do," answered Dick, grimly. "She has been my aunt's companion and victim for five-and-twenty years. Lean and lank and spectacled, and fifty if a day."

"Fifty! Holy Moses!" gasped Will. "It's a clear case for a fight, Dick. The old woman was nutty, sure, when she made a document like that. There's not a judge or jury in the world that wouldn't stand by you. Break the will, old man. You've got a proof of out-and-out senility there in your hand. You can break the will to smash."

"I'll try it, at all events," answered Dick, seeing long years of professional waiting shortened by a golden cut.

"I'll take the first steamer I can get and make a fight of it."

And four days later Mr. Elton boarded a great French liner whose decks were gay with crowds of returning tourists.

"Makes me feel like home, sweet home myself," said Will Marsh, who was seeing Dick off, as they made their way through chattering groups laden with parting flowers. "Well, good-by, old boy, and good luck to you. Fight it out if it takes all the summer. Just get Mary Jane to show up in court and you'll break Aunt Prue's will certain." And with a parting grip, Will Marsh turned away, while Dick Elton's gaze, following his friend, was suddenly arrested by a questioning, startled glance from a pair of eyes that seemed to flash violet fire.

They belonged to a girl who stood by the steamer's deck-rail, her arms full of roses.

So swift and fleeting was that violet flash that almost as Dick caught its blaze the eyes had turned again, and she was nodding and smiling adieux to her friends upon the shore. "Marie, Marie!" it seemed a bevy of girlish schoolmates calling to her: "Adieu, adieu, chère Marie!"

And Dick saw that the violet eyes were brimming now with tears that quenched all their fire.

Marie, Marie—the soft music of the name lingered in Mr. Elton's ear, and those eyes—really, he had never seen such eyes! It was almost impossible to believe they could flash, shadowed as they were by those fringing lashes. And the young gentleman, who had found following the footsteps of the great specialist too absorbing to admit of any social distraction, awoke to new and sudden interest in feminine charms. For beside these violet eyes, Miss Marie had a mass of rippling golden hair that the winds blew in soft tendrils about neck and brow in defiance of hat and veil. She had also a chaperone, a stout, middle-aged lady, who at the ship's first roll descended promptly to her stateroom and was seen no more. By ones, twos, threes, finally by dozens and scores, the other

passengers followed her example, for the winds were high and the sea was rough and even the stately *La Normandie* bent and swayed as she rode the cresting, foam-capped billows. But Miss Marie of the violet eyes was unconquerable. Every morning found her on deck, bewitchingly defiant of winds and seas; every evening Mr. Elton, striding his own solitary way, saw the graceful figure leaning against the deck-rail, dreamily watching the sunset sky. Even at night she lingered in the wide open, for the moon rode in triumph through the blue vault above, silvering the sea, and either its madness or some other eerie spell was working havoc in Dick Elton's mind and heart. But though the etiquette of ocean travel dispenses with the stiffer social formalities of terra firma, Mr. Elton found Miss Carter, as the captain called the violet-eyed enchantress, very difficult of approach.

All the little courtesies that a gentleman can fitly and gracefully render to an unattended lady were received with a frosty civility distinctly repelling. It was not until the fifth night out, when a gust of friendly wind snatched the silken scarf from the golden head, and Dick recovered it by a reckless spring over the deck-rail, that the young lady was startled into a thaw.



"Oh, thank you! But you should not have done that. For a moment I thought you were gone," she added with a little nervous laugh. "And for my poor little scarf! You should have stopped to count costs."

"Do I look so completely the commercial traveler?" he said, stung, he scarcely knew why, by a jarring note in the silvery voice.

"No," she answered, "but it is an humble self-valuation that does not outweigh three yards of silk. And you could not possibly know the weeks of work done on it by a saintly hand." And as she drew the creamy folds about neck and shoulders she shook out the embroidered ends. "It was the parting gift of dear Mère Aline, and every stitch, I am sure, set with a tender prayer for me."

"You are a convent girl, then," said Elton, gently. "I guessed as much."

"You did? And why?" she asked, with a little laugh.

"There is a stamp—well, no, that is too rigid a word—rather, a touch, an air, a bloom, that is unmistakable."

"And that is killed by the first hoar frost," she mocked lightly.

"Oh, no—not necessarily," he answered.



"I think so," she continued. "I had not been out of St. Ursule's three days before I felt its nip."

"Impossible!" declared Dick.

"Not at all—quite true," she said in the same mocking tone. "It stung, I confess, but it is only a touch, I suppose, of what I will have to meet later on."

"Don't say, don't think that," said the gentleman, with a new note thrilling in his deep voice. "To one like you the world should be all summer and sunshine."

"On the contrary, it is very black with storm," she replied. "I am going home to face a most unpleasant situation, Mr. Elton," and the sweet voice quivered.

"That is too bad." Mr. Elton found his head rapidly going, but bravely struggled to keep his usual balance. "But surely you have friends to stand by you?"

"None," she answered sadly. "My last friend is dead. I am an orphan and alone."

"Alone! not—not alone," for a moment Dick lost hold of himself, "not while I—while—I mean—that—that if there is anything I can do to serve—to help you——"

"Thank you," and the old icy chill fell flat upon

his trembling ardor. "There is nothing at all." And conscious that he had woefully blundered, poor Dick tried to recoup by plunging into remote personalities.

"I am home on rather disagreeable business myself, both disagreeable and absurd."

"Really?" There was forced interest in the chilly tone, but Dick determined to hold ground at any cost.

"There is an amusing side to the situation which an outsider, I suppose, can see, though to me it is grim enough. An old aunt from whom I had reasonable expectations has just died."

"And left you—the expectations, I hope?" There was a quiet cut in the low tone.

"More than the expectations," answered Dick grimly. "She saddled them most unexpectedly with a bride."

"Ah! that was—over-generous!" said the young lady with a little odd laugh.

"It was a last stroke of bitter, cantankerous cussedness," blurted out Dick in wrathful consciousness that he was missing it all around. "I was just twenty-five my last birthday, and I am either to forfeit my heritage or marry my late aunt's com-

panion and victim, a sallow, sour-faced spinster of fifty, with——”

“Oh, hush, hush, hush!” The sweet young voice was tremulous now with strange appeal. “Don’t talk like that, please. Surely you know she is dead—has been dead two years?”

“Dead!” echoed Dick. “Who has been dead two years? Not Aunt Prue!”

“No; my poor Aunt Mary Jane.”

“Your Aunt Mary Jane!” gasped the young man in bewilderment.

“Yes, my dear Aunt Mary Jane. When she was dying Miss Elton promised her she would always take care of me. Oh, I understand now, I understand what you thought,” and the sweet young voice trembled between laughter and tears. “I have known who you were all along, and have almost—almost hated you, because—because—well, my name was spelled wrong on the ship’s books, and I am the Mary Jane Carleton that you and your friend were talking about the day we sailed—that you were going to show up in court, and break—break Aunt Prue’s will.”

“You! You!” For a moment Dick could only stare at the speaker in dumb bewilderment. Then heaven and earth seemed to blaze out in rapturous

revelation. Reckless of consequences, he caught both of Miss Mary Jane Carleton's slim white hands in a possessive grasp.

"Break Aunt Prue's will? Never. It shall stand until the heavens and earth pass away. For with it or without it, I am Mary Jane Carleton's forever."

And three days afterward Lawyer Bland and Father Deane, who sat in perturbed consideration of the two indignant and defiant letters that had preceded, by swift mail steamers, the joint heirs across the Atlantic, were startled by the appearance of the young people under discussion.

Mr. Elton's face was a study of supreme satisfaction, and Miss Carleton's violet eyes had gained even a softer radiance and her lips a sweeter smile.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bland! Good-morning, Father! We've come to say you can cut out that legal fight. We came over on the same steamer and have settled things ourselves."

"Amicably, I trust and hope, my young friends," said the dry little lawyer, rubbing his hands.

"Most amicably, as I see," laughed wiser Father Deane. "And I'll have no old maids' home. Well, I am glad of it. It's a state of life the Church does not encourage. So God bless you, my dear children—God bless you from my heart."

# His Mother's Soul

BY BERTHA BONDY

THERE were fifteen of them at the dinner table with their host, Captain Dantival, most of them being officers of the little garrison, while the rest were wealthy young men from a neighboring city.

The occasion of the festivity was the celebration of Dantival's last bachelor supper, this being almost the eve of his wedding. He had been engaged three weeks to a beautiful young girl, the daughter of one of the greatest landowners in that section of the country, and, being very much in love, he had carried the day in having the wedding set for the week following. To fill his cup of happiness, he had also just been promoted to a higher charge in the army, which necessitated his removal to the capital. He immediately bought a fine villa there, and only returned to his former garrison in order to bid his old friends and comrades farewell.

Dinner was still in progress, and as all the guests belonged to the better class, the conversation, although animated, was not boisterous. Owing



to this circumstance it was possible to hear a peculiar, light, vibrating tone, which now became audible from the street. Several gentlemen immediately commented upon this, remarking that it was strange to hear such a sound in that neighborhood, where there were villas for the greater part, and in consequence only very little traffic.

"What sound are you referring to?" inquired some one.

"It is the little bell of a priest," his neighbor replied; "no doubt he is taking the Last Supper to a dying person."

"Why, he is halting before the house!" exclaimed another. Hardly had the speaker finished when a servant entered, announcing that a priest was below, accompanied by a choir boy, and desired to see the Captain at once.

"What an idea! Of course it is a joke, but one in very poor taste!" the latter exclaimed.

"Just send word to him that he's made a mistake in the person," suggested one of the guests.

But the Captain replied: "No. On the contrary, his Reverence must be received with all due honor and courtesy. Ask him to come up and we'll drink his health, so as to give a bad joke a good ending."

"How strange it should be if a premonition had



led him here!" remarked another guest, in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Superstitious, my friend?" retorted another.

"Indeed, my dear sir, do you wish to pose as a devout believer who despises any such weakness? Moreover—" Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the priest.

"Pardon me, gentlemen, for disturbing your feast, but duty called me here! Mr. Raoul Dantival?" he inquired with a slightly hesitating tone of voice, turning to the host, who had risen to meet him.

"I am he!"

"Captain?"

"Quite right."

"Then I was not mistaken! But—I really do not comprehend——"

"Nor I, your Reverence!" laughingly answered the Captain; "but perhaps it is some one whom I forgot to invite for dinner, and who wishes to get even with me in this charming manner! It does not matter in the least, only I am sorry that your Reverence had the trouble of coming here."

"Oh, do not mention it, I beg; a priest has to go where he is called."

"May I inquire who asked your Reverence to come?"

"A lady."

"A lady?" here interrupted one of the gentlemen; "that is your punishment, because you are going to be married. And how very clever of the lady to send you the Last Sacraments since you are in truth now burying your bachelorhood."

Everybody laughed. Only Dantival remained serious, believing this restraint compatible with the respect due to the priest's calling.

The priest evidently seemed embarrassed.

"Could you not describe the lady to me?" continued Dantival.

"Why should I do that?" returned the priest. "I believe, as these gentlemen do, that the whole thing is a joke, thank the Lord! I shall leave at once, and again beg to be excused, Captain."

"Please wait another minute, your Reverence!" begged Dantival; "even if it was only a farce, I can not understand what lady might care to play such a joke on me. Do you know whether the lady lives in this town?"

"I hardly think so, and at any rate I do not know her. I met her after Mass, at the entrance of the church. She is a distinguished-looking per-

son, and I noticed that she wore a cloak richly trimmed with fur. Stepping up quickly to me, she said: 'Make haste to take the Last Sacraments to Captain Raoul Dantival; but for heaven's sake do not tarry, as the case does not admit of any delay, and I should be unhappy if he died without the consolation of the Church.'

"I immediately turned back into the vestry to get the holy oil, while the lady waited outside to see whether I would do as she had bidden me. When I passed her again, on my way to your house, I saw her features distinctly, for she had thrown back her veil, and the light of the street lantern shone full on her face."

"And your Reverence had really never seen her before?"

"No, never. But permit me to ask, Captain—who is that lady there?"

A servant had just opened the door to the parlor, in the middle of which stood an easel, bearing the portrait of a lady in life size.

"That is my mother!" answered the Captain.

"Your mother?" echoed the priest.

"Yes, your Reverence, my mother, whom I lost two years ago!"

The priest stared at Dantival in the greatest be-

wilderment. The latter had become very pale. Trembling visibly, he seized the arm of the priest and drew him toward the picture.

"Look! Do you recognize her again?" he inquired breathlessly. "Was it this woman?"

"Captain, I do not know what to say! It does not seem possible, and yet a mistake is out of the question. It was the same figure, the same face, that very fur cloak. Yes, that is the lady who sent me."

"She had on that fur coat?" Dantival exclaimed, enunciating every word sharply. "Then there can be no possibility of a mistake! Only a few weeks before her death, when she was already suffering with the fatal disease, she said to me one day: 'When you are about to bury me, my child, do not forget to put my fur coat into the coffin too. It must be so cold and damp in the grave!' She shivered at these words, and I do not know whether they had been spoken in jest or in earnest, but even the slightest wish expressed by my mother was a command for me, and so I had the garment buried with her!"

The guests had risen, and the expression of their faces visibly depicted the impression which this scene made on them. All, with the exception of

the sceptical Briffand, seemed very much perturbed, and their eyes alternately sought the grave face of the priest, that of their excited host and the serious, immovable features of that female portrait.

"A strange coincidence, is it not, my friends?" demanded the Captain.

"Spiritualism!" quickly declared Briffand, with the old sarcasm in his tone.

"Spiritualism? Possibly!" answered Dantival sadly, "but I would like to add something which seems of great significance to me in this case. As my mother had lost her husband and several children while I was still an infant, I was the only one left of her dear ones, and consequently all her love was lavished on me. She was very pious, and had a penetrating, clear-sighted mind, especially when her interest was excited. She knew me so well and was so accustomed to read my heart, that she often guessed at my wishes before I was aware of them myself. She was my best friend and adviser, and even after her death I have often felt her influence on my thoughts and actions."

"That doesn't seem at all strange to me," interrupted Briffand, "for whenever you had a decision to make, you undoubtedly asked yourself,



‘What advice would my mother give me?’ And the mental companionship of former days inspired you so strongly that it seemed as if she actually spoke to you.”

“That may be,” continued Dantival. “But another important thing will ever remain before my memory. One of the last remarks she made to me was: ‘My son, although I am apparently leaving you now, I shall in reality always be with you. My soul (which I believe to be immortal, according to the precepts of our Church) will watch over you, and unfettered by any earthly weakness, will be better able to judge of what is beneficial to you. And,’ she continued affectionately, ‘I shall pray God for the grace of taking you away, in case life would only have disappointments in store for you!’ If my mother has come to send me a priest, that must undoubtedly mean that some great calamity is in store for me, and that God has answered her prayer!”

Dantival’s excitement had grown with every word he uttered, his eyes filled with tears, and in his endeavor to steady himself his hand clutched convulsively at the back of an arm-chair.

“My friend,” now interrupted Briffand, who, being a great gourmand, was afraid that the dinner



would be spoiled by this long and tedious interruption, "forget these sad stories, for otherwise our nice dinner will never agree with you." And turning to the priest with a forced smile, he continued: "Should any shade ever leave such a message with you for me, your Reverence, pray have the kindness to attend to the matter in the morning before I have dined!"

"Gentlemen, I can only repeat that I deeply regret having come at such an unseasonable time," gravely declared the priest, without paying any attention to Briffand's words. "Captain Dantival does not need me, and I shall therefore go my way."

"No, no!" begged Dantival; "however strange the whole proceeding may seem, my friend's scepticism is not able to efface the deep impression which your message has made upon me, nor do I want you to have come for nothing. I therefore beg your Reverence to accompany me to my room and to administer the last rites to me there. The rest will take care of itself."

Followed by the choir-boy, they left the room.

The guests remained behind, their mirth changed to sadness and doubt. One of them finally remarked: "Dantival is quite upset; per-

haps he is really ill. I believe it would be advisable for some one to remain near him."

"Certainly," replied another, "but I imagine he will return to us very much quieter after that little ceremony is over."

Hardly had these words been spoken, when the servant entered and announced that his master wished to be excused, as he had a headache and would like to retire.

"Very well," rejoined Briffand, "tell your master not to disturb himself on our account." Then turning to the others, he continued: "What are you going to do, gentlemen? As for me, I intend to stay here and begin my rôle as sick-nurse at once."

"We shall all stay," came from a dozen voices unanimously.

"Very well. Let us watch at his bedside, then, alternately for an hour."

Dantival had fallen asleep. His breath came regularly and he seemed normal in every respect; occasionally his lips moved, as if he were conversing with some one in a dream. There was nothing strange about this, however, as one often talks in one's sleep.

About three o'clock in the morning it was

Briffand's turn to watch over his sleeping friend. He, the sceptic and freethinker, was doubly anxious to have his opinion verified that nothing unusual would take place. Dantival began to throw himself about restlessly, and he seemed to breathe with difficulty.

"Are you not feeling well?" inquired Briffand anxiously. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

No answer.

Dantival became more and more restless—for a second he gasped for breath, then his body stiffened and stretched. His eyes were wide open, but he could no longer see. In the first excitement, Briffand had jumped up, only to fall back into his chair like one paralyzed. He had seen something which almost took his breath away.

Not until several minutes had passed was he able to rise again. His heart almost beat in his throat when he tore open the parlor door, where his companions either sat about in groups, talking, or were moping by themselves, half-asleep.

"My friends," he called, in a voice hoarse with emotion, "it is awful, awful! He is dead, really, and I have seen her, his mother! She came into the room, just as the priest saw her, and going toward the bed, stooped over her son and closed

his eyes! I saw, too, how she kissed his forehead and then left the room again, as quietly as she had come."

Deeply touched, all entered the chamber of death. Briffand had told the truth, Dantival was dead.

On the following day, while the little town was still entirely under the spell which the sudden death of the popular young officer had cast upon it, another new and exciting piece of news was spread like wildfire. Dantival's intended bride had eloped with her riding-master on the very night of his death! This event reminded the friends of the deceased of his mother's last words, which were naturally recalled to them by this circumstance.

"Poor fellow!" murmured Briffand, whose scepticism had received a severe shock. "You were spared a terrible grief; the pious, loving soul of your mother has shielded you from despair."

# Herrick's Success

BY MAUD REGAN

SOME decades since, Herrick, then in the first flush of his success, had interested himself during hurried business trips to out-of-the-way corners of the globe in the collection of rarities and antiques for the adornment of a home which then had loomed large among the happy possibilities of a future dazzlingly golden.

When, quite suddenly, that home, like some fair mirage, had melted from his life's horizon, a few of these had drifted to his private office—that still center whence radiated forces felt and reckoned with in farthest confines of the land.

The outer offices might re-echo to a continual bustle of arrival and departure, of hurrying clerks and departing messengers, to a babel punctuated by tinkle of telephones and tapping of "tickers," but the quiet of the inner sanctum was jealously guarded against all but the most necessary invasions, for Herrick's nerves were paying the toll of those crowded, strenuous years which had made of him a financial power. Little in the furnishing



of the spacious, high-ceiled room, almost monastic in its quiet, suggested his connection with the restless activities surging beyond its portals. The desk telephone seemed a mere modern impertinence upon the massive carved antique writing table, among whose docketed papers Herrick's lean, well-modelled hands moved with the deftness and precision of long custom.

The black oak settles had come from an old California mission; the stamped leather hangings, showing gilding yet in certain lights, had formed the background for a stately, leisurely existence in an old Sevillian mansion. French—from a dismantled chapel in Avignon—the carved pedestals, with exquisite traceries of leaf and vine that supported bronze busts of Dante and Petrarch on either side of the red brick fireplace, where great blazing logs vanquished the early autumn chill. Such were the daily surroundings of the man who was seldom discussed calmly, dispassionately, or otherwise than in a hyperbole of praise or blame.

Here hailed as a Napoleon of finance playing his great game callously, but legitimately; there execrated as a monstrous, malign human spider, weaving cruel far-reaching webs for the enmesh-



ing of the confiding and unwary, he had in either rôle furnished a fruitful theme for pen and pencil of reporter and cartoonist.

A young artist to whom he had lately accorded an interview had achieved sudden fame by a new presentation of a familiar subject in a sketch appearing first in D——'s weekly, above the line stolen from a nursery jingle: "The king was in his counting-house." It showed Herrick seated before his littered desk, a powerful drooping figure; lean, clear-cut face etched deep with lines of fatigue and strain; eyes keen, sunken, unsatisfied—the whole figure eloquent of weariness and disillusionment.

Down in the New Hampshire village of his boyhood, a woman, seeing it, had caught her breath with a little hurt cry.

"Oh, my dear, the years have not been kind to you," she had whispered, scanning the worn face with hungry intentness.

Somehow, on this sparkling, sun-filled autumn day the familiar settings of his life—leathern hangings and carved rarities from over seas—assumed for Herrick a new significance; caught at old memories; set long-silenced chords once more athrob. Seville, Florence, Avignon—the names

recalled old, abandoned plans for leisurely travel, schemes of literary and artistic pilgrimages long foregone; spoke, too, of the gradual narrowing of his life to a single engrossing interest.

Success—at its price of eternal vigilance, universal distrust? To-day Herrick was in the mood to fancy that it had been too dearly purchased; that it had proved, at last, but Dead Sea Fruit. Had it not estranged him from the one woman who had ever seemed worth the winning, though, as he tried to believe, it was love and ambition for her which first had drawn him into the financial arena?

He strove to harden himself with the memory of how he had hastened to her with the history of that first shrewd deal which had set “the Street” ringing with his name. How grave she had been, how unresponsive! The slim gray-eyed girl of twenty summers, whose praise was dearest to him, measuring him by some quixotic impossible standard, had unexpectedly withheld her sympathy, had remained the stubborn Mordecai, robbing all subsequent triumphs of their full zest.

“I think I understand,” she had said, knitting her level brows in that little intent expression Herrick so vividly remembered. “I suppose, ac-

according to the code, it was a perfectly legitimate advantage, but to me it all seems very cruel and pitiless and unworthy. Oh, Jim!" she had exclaimed, clasping her slim hands impulsively about his arm, "I want you to leave it all *now*, while you can, before it has grown to be a master passion slowly stifling all that is best in you. I am ambitious for you, yes, but in such a different way."

Herrick, intoxicated with his first draught of success, had tenderly laughed away her arguments.

"Dear little goose! You mustn't look for the chivalry of the Round Table in Wall Street! As for giving up—why, Margaret, the ball is at my feet," Herrick had said with a toss of his handsome head.

Looking backward to that day, he always seemed to see himself standing at one of those cross-roads of life unrecognized for such till they have slipped irrevocably into the background of existence and one's way has been chosen for weal or woe.

Most of the women with whom life had since brought him in contact had been bred in the creed to which he had then vainly striven to convert Margaret. These had reserved their warmest wel-

comes, their sunniest smiles for Herrick, the great matrimonial *parti*—but, alas for human inconsistency! the thinly veiled sordidness of their aims had only repelled him; none of them had quite measured up to the standard of the slender gray-eyed girl, hardly beautiful, who taught school and made the simple frocks over which they would have curled contemptuous lips.

“I suppose it is a part of my Nemesis,” Herrick said with a curious twisted smile. “‘We needs must love the highest when we see it, not Launce-  
lot, nor another,’—only having let it slip out of my life the logical course would be to banish the memory of it.”

But this, for all his striving, had been the one thing Herrick had found it impossible to accomplish. Through the crowded years he had kept very clear and vivid the picture of Margaret as he had last seen her in the golden June twilight, seated upon the veranda steps, clad all in white. No detail was dim or blurred; the pure oval curve of the half-averted face; the depth and tenderness of the dark-fringed eyes gazing far past him to where the fleecy clouds were herding in the rosy meadows of the sunset; the slim hands so instinct with character, absently stripping the blossoms

of the flowering almond branch that lay across her lap; the small head, with its blown tendrils of dusky hair, thrown backward in a pose very haunting and characteristic.

"Jim, dear," the reedy flute-like voice was saying, "I have begun to think we speak a different language, you and I. Success for us has not the same meaning. To you it is represented by money, power, position—oh, so many things that are nothing to me. In an effort to win it you are slowly stifling all that is best in you, all that has meant most to me; are growing hard, suspicious, pitiless. Dear, you will never know how it hurts me to speak so, but perhaps no one else may ever be brave enough. You see you have grown to be such a personage," she concluded, with a wistful little smile.

"At least no one can accuse you of moral cowardice nor of blindness to my defects. Not one of my enemies in 'the Street' could have made a stronger case for the prosecution," Herrick had answered bitterly.

The girl caught her breath sharply, but after an instant's pause went on, quietly, steadily, voicing thoughts which the months had made sadly familiar.



"Then there is your side to be considered. I am afraid I should never fit in with your new life. I should constantly blunder; disappoint you in a hundred ways, and after a while you might come to realize how mistaken you had been to want me so much. Your world would be saying what a poor match you had made, and I—I should feel caged, stifled. Oh! I can not make you understand," she had concluded hopelessly.

Even then the closing words had struck Herrick as slightly humorous on the lips of a little provincial before whom his wealth opened such dazzling vistas, such vast opportunities! But across his musings the reedy voice had broken, pursuing its arraignment.

"You are losing your sense of values, of proportion," Margaret had said, groping uncertainly for her words.

Suddenly she recalled a sentence made for her need nearly two thousand years before: "Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment?" she had gravely concluded.

Ah, well! For the last decade his whole life had been a feverish negative to the world-old question, but somehow he felt that if to-day, standing on that lonely pinnacle of his highest success,



Margaret were once more to question him, the clear candor of her eyes would compel a different answer.

The meat? Husks! The raiment? Motley!

He rose from his chair impatiently, pushing aside the papers that littered his desk, and with hands thrust deep into the pockets of his tweed coat walked to a window and stood gazing moodily down upon the busy streets, black with hurrying microscopic atoms.

There floated up from them the subdued sullen roar which was the voice of Gotham—the persistent, almost unheeded undertone of his existence.

It sounded ominous, menacing to-day. “The noise of the arena,” said Herrick softly. “Hark how the lions roar! I should have short shrift down there. Fortunately I’ve contrived so far to dominate the situation, but I’ve paid the price. Just Heaven! how I’ve paid!”

As he turned abruptly on his heel, the stern melancholy of his face was irradiated by a sudden boyish smile, and he advanced with outstretched hands to greet a man of about his own age, tall, spare, distinguished, with very frank, searching brown eyes, and a clerical coat that might have been shabby had it not been so well

brushed. A man in his own way as busy as Herrick, only his way lay far from the clubs and the brown stone district, down among crowded tenements, where ragged children clung unrebuked to his coat-tails, and sick and sorry hailed him as a visible providence. Occasionally the more pressing needs of Lazarus drove him as ambassador to the dwellings of Dives— “Only you mustn’t class me with Dives. I *don’t* fare sumptuously, and I *do* occasionally scatter crumbs,” Herrick had said at their first meeting, with a smile which had seemed to establish a fellowship between them.

“Very substantial crumbs, thank you,” Father Weston had replied, folding the generous check, which meant heat, food, life itself, down in the sordid tenements.

“Herrick? Not a Catholic name, I think?” he had hazarded courteously.

“No. It was my mother who was a Catholic, but I am nothing else. Somehow that sort of thing has been crowded out of my life.”

“That is a pity,” said Father Weston gravely.

“I seem to remember that once, long ago, there was a young man who turned from the Master sorrowing because he had great possessions.” It was the first of those little trenchant sermons

which "the padre," as Herrick called him, flung in passing to the worldling for whom he had conceived a deep, genuine liking, divining that other, worthier, submerged self which Margaret mourned.

"Ah, padre!" said Herrick gaily. "Pardon the abysmal abstraction which took no note of your entrance. Curious that no ominous pricking in my thumbs warned me that my pocket-book must shortly suffer! See, I throw up my hands," he continued, playfully suiting the action to the word. "What is the latest extortion? Do you suppose all this will be counted unto me for righteousness?"

"No; though you give all and have not charity, it profits nothing."

Herrick laughed. The reply was very characteristic.

"Still, my orphans profit, and I set them praying, so your conversion is only a matter of time. It is slow because of the exceeding hardness of your heart, and the fundamental discrepancy between the camel and the needle's eye. Do you know," concluded "the padre" reflectively, "were I allowed to choose another missionary, I should enlist a good woman?"

"No, padre—there *was* a good woman once, but she gave me up for a bad lot, and I've spent the last ten years justifying her decision," said Herrick, rather bitterly.

"I think you have misjudged her," said the priest slowly. "Some day you will meet her and tell her so."

"No, we are not likely to meet. Miracles don't happen nowadays. See, padre, I will turn the tables and preach you a little sermon. *Vanitas Vanitatum!* I am weary to death of the whole sordid business, and to-day I don't much care whether shop keeps or not."

"I begin to have hopes of you," said the priest, laying a friendly hand on Herrick's shoulder. "What! you are writing a check without ever asking me what it's for? This time my appeal is in behalf of the blind orphanage."

"There be many kinds of blindness," said Herrick, sadly.

"Ah, but fortunately not all are hopeless," said the priest, responding to the unspoken thought.

Herrick glanced at his watch as the tall, athletic figure passed through the doorway. Nearly two, and he had almost forgotten the expediency

of lunching! Swiftly he touched the bell which summoned his secretary.

"Dawson, I am going out to lunch. I shall not be back," he said. The young man's face bore sufficient witness to his surprise.

"But—" he began.

Herrick waved the interruption impatiently aside. "I shall not be back," he reiterated.

He felt curiously like a truant as the elevator dived swiftly downwards to the central rotunda of the great office building. Experience offered no precedent for this half-holiday he had wrenched free of so many clamorous claims.

"Why, a fortune may hang on the issues of one hour," habit suggested.

"It can't be helped," rejoined Herrick doggedly. "I suppose even in the galleys they sometimes rest."

After a chop and a glass of sherry at a downtown restaurant—it seemed only natural on such a day to shun the chatter of the club—Herrick found himself wondering what diversion the city offered for a mad prodigal with a whole afternoon to squander.

A matinee, perhaps? None of your dreary problem plays to which he had sometimes listened

in fashionable boxes with but thinly veiled disgust, but something fresh and wholesome and sweet, that would linger with a pleasant after taste.

And so, in a few minutes, he found himself in the crowded lobby of a theater to which he had been drawn by a play whose name seemed to jump with his mood: "The Road to Yesterday."

The road to yesterday—it was a path one sometimes traveled in dreams—awake one knew that it was guarded by the angel of lost Edens. So Herrick mused as he pushed his way through the surging crowd. Suddenly his pulses gave a startled leap. That stately, gray-clad woman before him; that familiar set of small, dark head; that curve of cheek and shell-like ear! Was this part of the reality or of the dream? Then her voice, as she asked some simple question of an usher—surely only one woman in the world spoke with just such reedy, mellow inflections. It was Margaret! Margaret whom he was following down the dim carpeted aisle. Margaret who would presently turn—ah!

Just for a moment the gray eyes met his absently, then lit with sudden radiance, while a delicate flush dyed the clear pallor of her face. It



was a momentary revelation which presently Margaret's manner would carefully belie, but during that moment Herrick had firmly gripped the situation as he had dominated so many a crisis in "the Street." There must be no conventional meeting as of casual strangers, no studied ignoring of a past so vivid in the minds of both.

"Why, Margaret, what incredible good fortune! I don't care who owns this seat, I mean to keep it, and I hope the curtain won't go up for hours."

"Do you always manage to get what you want in that high-handed fashion?" The words were hardly spoken before Margaret realized her error.

Herrick was swift to seize his opportunity. "Not always," he said gravely. "I've gone ten long years without you. You prophesied well, dear. It's been a sordid game I've played, and it hasn't been worth its candle, but it's ended now. I wonder if you think me worth another chance?" he ended wistfully.

Margaret strove to answer lightly, the while her heart was saying, "How worn he is! How grave! How tired!"

"You forget that I am more ineligible than ever," she said. "I am quite staid and elderly—

almost thirty. My heart should be an extinct volcano."

"You elderly!" Herrick laughed gaily. "Why, time has stood still for you. I can see all your young enthusiasms shining out of your eyes; you haven't lowered a single standard, parted with one beautiful illusion. The years have touched you only to bless. And I suppose it is because you seem so much like a celestial visitant that I forget that there are probably quite ordinary and prosaic reasons why you are here. Isn't it term time? Does school still keep?"

"No, I've given up teaching; there was a tiny windfall five years ago which made it possible. It didn't seem right to keep on when there are so many hands and so little work to go round; and this is just one of those red-letter holiday jaunts I sometimes allow myself. My aunt has found it rather exhausting, I am afraid—I'm such an insatiable sightseer! She is in her room now busily engaged in curing a headache. Solitude is part of the treatment, or I should be with her. By the way," she concluded gaily, "shall I convey to her your thanks for the use of her chair?"

"I decline to think that our meeting hinged on the chances of a headache or the caprice of an

usher. That would be pagan blindness. It's just—Providence," said Herrick with a new grave note in his voice.

"It seems so strange, so incredible," said Margaret, gently.

"That we two should find a road to yesterday? Why, dear, 'With whom beside would I dare pursue the path gray heads abhor'? Isn't it odd," he continued, with a face grown suddenly bright and boyish, "the padre told me I should some day find you, but a few hours ago that seemed too good for belief. By the way, Margaret, you will like the padre. *He* won't make friends of Mammon even in a good cause. He just stalks into my office, holds me up in a splendid sort of way, makes me write checks for his orphans, and thanks me with a pointed reference to the camel and the needle's eye."

Margaret's eyes twinkled merrily. "How very salutary! I'm sure I shall like the padre." Then she blushed prettily. "By the way, aren't you taking a great deal for granted?" she asked.

"No, dear. You are not going to punish me for the blindness of my youth, and that having found a lost pathway we shall follow it onward

“To an age so blest that by its side  
Youth seems the waste instead.”

And while he spoke, Margaret, with shining,  
tender eyes, saw the curtain rise on “The Road  
to Yesterday.”

# Monna Giovanna's Daughter

(Founded on an actual occurrence recorded in a Dominican chronicle of the fourteenth century)

BY ELSA SCHMIDT

MONNA GIOVANNA had but one grievance in life. And every one told her what a fortunate woman she was, from her mother and husband—most especially her husband—to quite casual acquaintances in the quaint, quiet, but somewhat sunless street wherein they dwelt. For Monna Giovanna had been very kindly smiled upon indeed by fortune. The fates, or shall we say—she would have preferred it, this good Catholic woman of fourteenth century Italy—the saints, had been propitious to her in everything which the heart of woman could desire—save only in one. But that one—she could have dispensed with many of her superfluous blessings might *it* but be granted to her sighs. For after ten years of serene and prosperous marital happiness, Giovanna Durante was still childless.

Yet, so every one told her, there was much, so much that Heaven had sent her in compensation, that she would indeed be a black ingrate (such was at all events the inference, if not the phrase) were

she to complain. Moreover, added some of those who were even less kindly disposed, the judgments of the Lord God were always just, and no doubt there were reasons for all that happened to people on this earth. So that patience, at the least, was the only befitting frame of mind for one who had been otherwise (and in seemingly far more important matters) so blessed and favored as she.

For, look you, Giovanna had been indeed very poorly off but for Paolo Durante's handsome offer of marriage to a girl who for all her good looks and her sweet temper could not be much of an acquisition, could not bring him a single *soldo* on her wedding-day. Every one, Paolo included, agreed in acclaiming the advent of such good fortune to a maiden, who, if indeed her birth were no lower than his own, yet surely could not but feel the warmest gratitude for the undoubted condescension of having been selected as the bride of a man so well-to-do, whose delicate silverwork was at once the despair and the pride of his craft. Paolo had proved, in the main, though subject to occasional violent and wholly unreasonable fits of rage, a kind and affectionate husband. And indeed the only thing wherein he tried Giovanna was his habit of obtru-



sively regarding himself as the *summum bonum* of his wife's existence, both here and hereafter, the sole and all-praiseworthy source of every joy and pleasure, great or small, of her days. Their house was the envy of neighbors, she loved flowers passionately, and had a garden that was a wilderness of fragrance and color, her dresses were always the admiration of beholders, and the silver treasures of dainty filigree of her husband's working, wherewith she decked herself, were absolutely unique. So that, as everybody said, she had much to be grateful for. And if at times Giovanna could have wished for less congratulation and for more sympathy, it was undoubtedly very wrong. So she was told, and so, by dint of wearisome repetition, she at last began to believe. Only old Padre Gabriele, to whom she confided her fear that she might after all be ungrateful to Providence, reassured and consoled her, and bade her pray on as fervently that her desire might be fulfilled.

And so Giovanna prayed on before the dim old painting of the Madonna with her sweet Bambino that hung in the chapel where the *ex-votos* were so numerous, and the tapers were constantly glimmering through the misty half-gloom that wrapped the great Cathedral. And through the shadows of the

place, from the dusky background of that venerated picture she caught ever, cameo-like, the pale bright gleam of their pitying faces turned on hers. One day she said to herself, struck by a sudden thought, like an inspiration, "When the Madonna shall smile upon me from out the darkness then I shall know that at last my prayer will be heard." And for weeks she waited eagerly, expectantly. But her tapers flamed themselves out in prayer, the blessings of the poor on her charity grew daily more and more fervent, and still Our Lady did not vouchsafe her smile.

Then at last there came a day, the Feast of Our Lady's bright Annunciation, when an angel had brought to her that news for which a world languished, and in the evening betaking herself again to the feet of her beloved Patroness, the sign Giovanna sought was granted to her longing gaze. The shadows and darkness of the shrine were illumined by the grace of Our Lady's gentle smile. For those were the ages of faith, and to the strong pleading of faith there is nothing that may be denied.

And from that day there was a strange new light in Giovanna's eyes and her smile was so beautiful that you would have thought, said one of her old pensioners, that she had seen *la santa Vergine* her-

self smiling at her from heaven. Which when Monna Giovanna heard she blushed as red as the damask roses she wore.

About a year later there was great feasting and merrymaking in Paolo Durante's dark but handsomely appointed house in the Via San Marco. Lights in burnished sconces gleamed against the walls, lending the soft luster of their flame to the massive plate and shining adornment of the festive board. Vivid and fragrant were the masses of flowers that were set, in profusion of riotous beauty, in unexpected places, white and gold lighting starlike the gloom of dusky corners, brilliance of purple, of crimson, and of enthralling blues glittering in the sunlight. And all the guests vowed that they had never attended such a christening feast in their lives; and that little Giovanna Annunziata Paolo upstairs, who lay smiling in her sleep peacefully as an angel, was a girl who had indeed every reason for self-congratulation in being the possessor of such a father, or, more correctly perhaps, in being possessed by such a father.

But Monna Giovanna's eyes, as she rested in quietness near her treasure, were full of a deep sadness, a wondering and grieved affright. Ever and anon, too, which was unusual with one of so self-

contained a nature, great tears would gather in the dark deep eyes, and roll slowly down the wan cheeks till they were lost in the cushion beneath her head. The strange words of saintly old Padre Gabriele as he held the new-baptized child in his arms had terrified her beyond measure. For Suora Caterina, the child's sponsor, to whom they had been spoken, had been charged to bear them to her sister Giovanna as a message of grave import.

"Guard her well," had been the priest's injunction, "for she is a treasure beyond price. There will come a day when this child will be received into the blessed company of Agnes, Catherine, Agatha and Ursula, for sister will she be to those chosen ones in the whiteness of her purity and in the glory of her martyrdom. Wherefore give thanks to God."

And pondering this saying, strange and very hard as she found it, Monna Giovanna's sorrow grew keener and deeper. So that as the months went by and baby Annunziata waxed stronger, fairer, and more winning day by day, as Suora Caterina's prayers grew ever more and more fervent for the beloved younger sister, Monna Giovanna grew paler and more delicate, and the pain in her eyes more apparent. Yet when pressed by

her husband she replied always that she felt well, and so in truth she did. For a breaking heart is not necessarily a physical complaint. Nevertheless, it may spell death as surely. As in the case of Signora Durante, it certainly did. But of this Paolo knew nothing, for his wife, dreading the possible effect, had postponed indefinitely the telling of the Padre's prophecy.

But one day, when Annunziata had attained the dignity of her second year, Giovanna felt that the time had come. And sending for Durante she repeated to him in her soft, pathetic tones, the words that had so grieved the life that was even then slowly ebbing from her, begging him to cherish the child of election for her that must soon leave him. Whereon Paolo, distraught with the double grief and frenzied with anger, would fain have flown to wreak vengeance upon the old priest. And only that at last her weakness and distress overcame his purpose, it would have been straightway fulfilled. But happy in his somewhat reluctant promise to forbear, she presently after faded away. And the face of sweet Monna Giovanna became at last only a fragrant memory, like a dead rose whereto its perfume clings with haunting persistence. In the heart of her child,



however, even the memory presently afterwards died away, for she was little more than a baby, and flowers and birds and a grave father's tender smile were things that she might still enjoy.

And enjoy them she did, to the full. Her cup of happiness was a very deep one, that even the less generous vintage of wayside pleasures would fill to the very brimming. And she drank daily deep draughts therefrom, and was well content, it seemed, even though she should never know richer, nobler goblet's fire. Indeed, her father and her aunt, watching the vivacious, beautiful, brilliant child, often would doubt that the Padre could have been right.

But it came as a shock to the proud, delighted Paolo, when one day, after Annunziata had completed her fifteenth year, she confided with some embarrassment but with much affection to her father that she desired to become a nun, and begged his blessing on her undertaking. She added that it was a long-cherished purpose, and that nothing in the world could shake her decision, which was unalterably fixed. Paolo, filled with wrath at the miscarrying of his plans for her, which were of a totally different nature, and secretly resolving upon an instant course of action,



merely remarked that he must have time to consider the matter, and left her in happy ignorance of his real feelings and intent.

A fortnight later Annunziata was somewhat surprised to note that preparations for a great feast were in course of progress at the house, and that a quantity of magnificent robes were provided for her. Yet not a suspicion of the real truth dawned upon her. So that when her father bade her attire herself in some of the costly things he had sent to her and preside at a feast to be held in her honor she obeyed readily enough, imagining it to be, perhaps, a sort of farewell to her acquaintances before she should go to join her cousin Columba in her quiet cloister home.

Sadly, however, was she undeceived. For after having received and welcomed her guests, her father, to her astonished dismay, proclaimed to all the company that the banquet was given in honor of her betrothal to the eldest son of a neighbor which he was now glad to make known. But Paolo had reckoned without his host. Seeing clearly her father's mind upon the matter, Annunziata acted with promptitude and with decision. Seizing one of the great knives upon the table beside her, she cut from her head with one swift

stroke all that wealth of beautiful dark hair which had so considerably enhanced her striking beauty. Casting it upon the ground she exclaimed aloud, "I have given myself to One only, and no one else shall share my heart with Him. This my father knows and so now do you all, for my decision is unalterable and I leave immediately for my convent."

This was too much for Paolo's violent temper. He took a step toward her, but even as he did so she turned and fled, and he fell a moment later stricken with a sudden apoplectic seizure. Of this Annunziata knew nothing. For she had on the instant left the house to make her way on foot to her cousin's, knowing that, for a time, at all events, her life itself was in grave danger at home.

She was no more molested. On the day of her reception of the habit the news reached their riverside convent that her father had passed away peacefully a day or two before, his last words those of sorrow for his deed and of love and blessing for his daughter.

After her first grief had exhausted itself, the soothing monotony of her close-cloistered life began insensibly to calm her spirit into perfect rest and at length restored even happiness to the inno-

cent heart. And so passed nine months of the year's novitiate and now her thoughts were directed to the approaching feast of her profession.

But there were terrible struggles devastating the country without of which these cloistered daughters of St. Francis had scarcely an idea. Vague rumors of internecine hostilities reached their ears from time to time, but of the real proportions of the awful storm of carnage, rapine, and terrorism that swept the face of their lovely but unhappy land they could not even dream. And little recked the poor nuns that the horror was at their very door, albeit there had indeed been sundry threatenings, until one day it burst upon them.

It was a lovely mellow day in early October. The peaches and the vines were at their fullest perfection in the quiet sunny garden, and the late flowers adorned the shrines in the chapel where the Sisters were chanting Vespers. The setting sun was emblazoning the sky with a rapture of crimson and the novice's white veil and her mantle were dyed in "the red glory of martyrdom."

Of a sudden there came a terrible sound as of crashing beams and splintering woodwork; the garden was filled with the bustle, disorder, and

the noise of armed men that have broken loose and are neither to have nor to hold. After one terrified moment of surprise that merged into awful comprehension, the suspended chant was resumed, and the voices that raised it were calm and clear as ever. The chapel doors were torn down, at the windows men swarmed in—strange, outlandish barbarians these, with their light complexions, pale brown hair, and altogether unknown and harsh-sounding tongue. One of them, grasping Mother Abbess as she rose, tall and stately, buried his poniard in her breast, and tearing from her girdle the rosary beads she wore, proceeded to despoil the shrines.

“Let us smoke the bees out of their hive, comrades!” roared two or three of the English mercenaries, for such they were, hordes of whom, in the pay of any great Italian noble who would, were such a scourge to the country, harassing, plundering, and utterly devastating and destroying whatever lay in their way; often enough quite uncontrollable even by their own native officers.

The fellows applauded the suggestion merrily, but while the company were actively engaged in prosecuting their purpose, one of them, less cruel of nature, facilitated the Sisters' escape by a side

door. This proved, however, but a difference of evils, for without they were immediately surrounded by a rough crowd of soldiers, who found great amusement in terrifying the helpless ladies. At last they wearied of their inhuman sport, and dismissing the little band practically unharmed, general attention began to center around a fight that two powerful men were waging for the possession of the beautiful novice whom they had captured. Her appeals, tears, and cries were alike unheeded, and the combat waxed momentarily fiercer. At last the dense, delighted throng was roughly and forcibly parted as a tall strong man, whose dress and bearing stamped him as one of superior rank, swiftly made his way to the scene of action.

Comprehending the situation at a glance, and giving a reassuring nod to the young nun, he endeavored to interpose his burly form betwixt the two.

"Fellows, ruffians," he roared, as he strove, but ineffectually, with blows and knocks to separate the combatants, who were locked in a blind fury of rage, "it is I, Hawkwood, your captain. Desist and let this girl alone, or I will have you both hanged like the dogs that you are!"



Finding his best efforts useless, and knowing what the end must inevitably be, he strode to the shrinking girl, who, however, instinctively felt that she need not fear him. Drawing his dagger with the characteristic decision of one who knows that he does the one possible thing, he seized her by the shoulder with a grip of steel, saying shortly,

“Your pardon, Lady, but I would rescue you!”

And he drove the dagger to the haft into her heart, with firm swift stroke. There was a smile on her pale face, and her last word was a prayer for him.

\* \* \* \* \*

“So, virgin, and martyr, and bride of her Son,” as says the Dominican Friar’s chronicle of that stirring, terrible time, “took her the Virgin Mary who had delivered her.”









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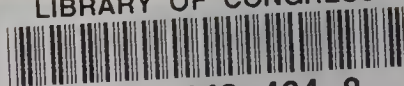
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